

THE DEVELOPMENT OF

BEXHILL-ON-SEA

SINCE 1880

EASTBOURNE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION.

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MAY, 1970.

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1
Use of Maps	2
I Historical Background	3
II Conditions for Expansion	9
III Early Urban Development	13
a) The 8th Earl de la Warr	15
b) Mr. John Webb	18
c) The Importance of the Railway	20
IV The Town's Sea Frontage	25
V Expansion	29
a) Charter of Incorporation	34
VI Post-Second World War Development & Related Trends	
a) Modern Development	39
b) Current Trends	45
VIII The Future	50
Conclusion	54
Bibliography and Acknowledgements	56

LIST OF MAPS, DIAGRAMS & PHOTOGRAPHS

- I.1 Relation of settlement to Relief and Geology
- I.2 Bexhill before Urban Expansion

- II.1 Victorian villa built in early 1880's
- II.2 Old Town Convalescent Home

- III.1 Areas developed from early 1880's to 1920
- III.2 Victorian terraced houses, early 1880's
- III.3 Almsouses built early 1880's
- III.4 Area of proposed development - Earl de la Warr's estate
- III.5 Proposed lay-out of de la Warr estate
- III.6 Houses built in 1890 - John Webb's estate
- III.7 Railway routes through and from Bexhill in relation to Eastbourne
and Hastings
- III.8 Position of stations and points of access
- III.9 Bexhill station prior to Urban Development
- III.10 Bexhill station: early 1880's to 1902
- III.11 Westcourt Drive Cattle arch
- III.12 Sackville road bridge

- IV.1 West Cliff: Protective measures
- IV.2 " " " "
- IV.3 Ashdown Sand and Fairlight Clay Cliffs, Galley Hill
- IV.4 Former and present coast lines, with position of Martello Towers
- IV.5 Ornamental gates and Kursaal
- IV.6 Cycling Track, East Parade, late 19th century
- IV.7 Cycling Tournament Publicity, late 19th century
- IV.8 Motor Racing Track, East Parade, late 19th century
- IV.9 Bexhill-on-Sea Sea Front: Stages of ownership

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|-------|--|
| V.1 | Extent of Development: 1896 |
| V.2 | Extent of Development: 1900 |
| V.3 | Early development, south of the railway |
| V.4 | Roads on Egerton Park Estates in process of development |
| V.5 | Map showing Inter-War expansion |
| V.6 | Pattern of Rateable Values: 1929 |
| V.7 | Wards of Bexhill |
| VI.1 | Population Increase: 1851 - 1970 |
| VI.2 | Post-War Expansion and Trends
Overlay: Pattern of Rateable Values: 1969 |
| VI.3 | Part of Birkdale development |
| VI.4 | High class property: South Cliff |
| VI.5 | Large private school, now closed |
| VI.6 | Victorian houses, many now converted to flats etc. (ex-Egerton
Park Estate) |
| VI.7 | Villas converted to flats etc. (ex-de la Warr Estate) |
| VI.8 | Modern flats built to replace large Victorian houses |
| VI.9 | Age Structure of Bexhill: 1951 |
| VI.10 | Age Structure of Bexhill: 1961 |
| VI.11 | Age Structure of Hastings: 1961 |
| VI.12 | Number of Live Births and Deaths: 1893 - 1968 |
| VI.13 | Birth and Death Rates: 1894 - 1968 |
| VI.14 | Wood Merchants: Beeching Trading Estate (North) |
| VI.15 | Commercial Vehicle Distributor: Beeching Trading Estate (South) |
| VI.16 | Brett Drive Trading Estate |
| VI.17 | Development of Beeching Trading Estate by Bexhill Corporation |
| VII.1 | Road improvements & Trading Estate extension: Development Plan |

INTRODUCTION

In the last hundred years, Bexhill has changed from "....a large and agreeable parish on the English Channel having a picturesque village seated on an agreeable eminence commanding extensive views both of sea and land....." ^{*} to a rapidly expanding urban settlement.

Physical features and the amenable climate have no doubt influenced the town's growth, but since it has never achieved fame by virtue of being a market town, communications or industrial centre, the reasons for its rapid growth at the end of the nineteenth century and again after the Second World War, are worth investigating. Recently, doubts have been raised concerning the town's present and future function as a "retirement resort" since the extreme imbalance is becoming a social problem. This has been aggravated, particularly over the last ten years, by developers catering almost exclusively for this age group.

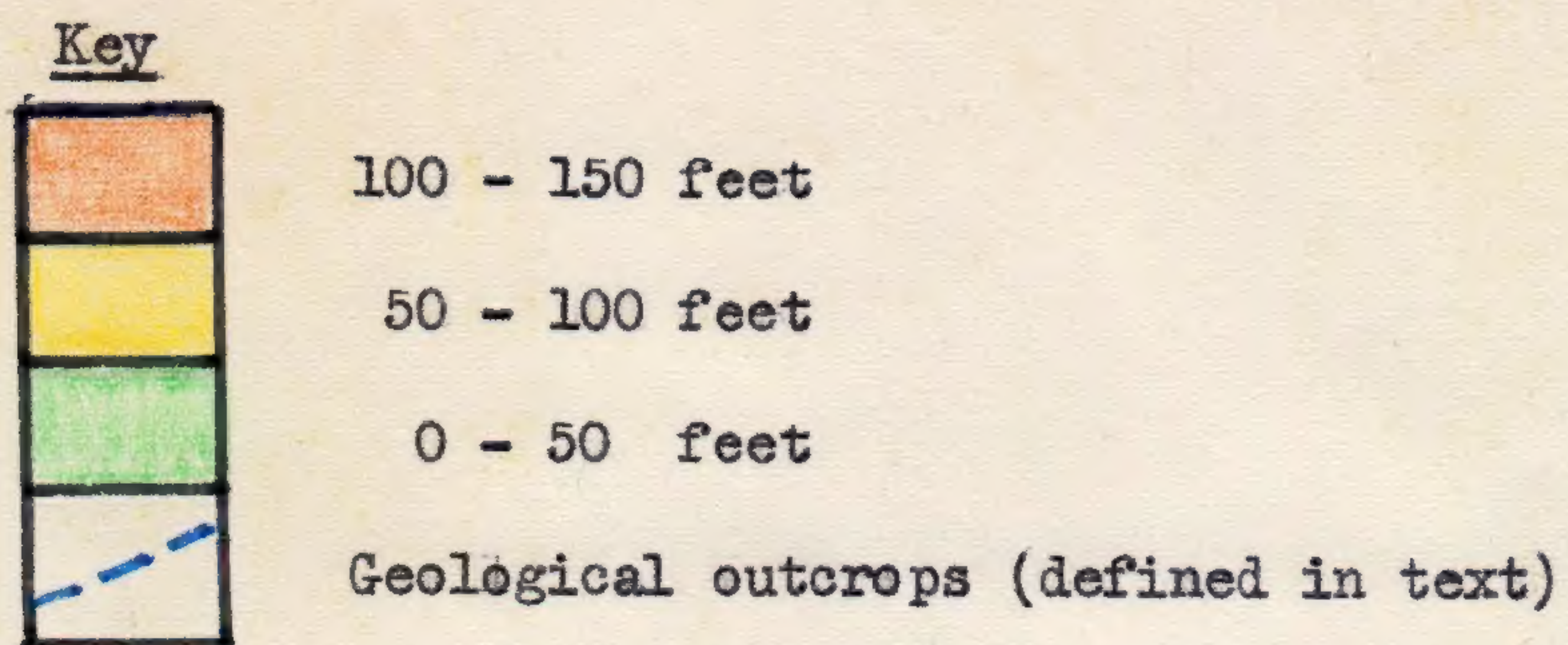
During the course of this study, I hope to follow the progress of, and discover the reasons for, the town's growth during the last century, and relate these to current trends and the future fate of the town.

* From "A Compendious History of Sussex" by M.A.Lower (1870)

During the course of this study, the 1st edition and latest editions of the 6" Ordnance Survey map will be used, and for convenience, the extent of these two maps is shown on the current street map of Bexhill, e.g. within the Borough boundary, following this page.

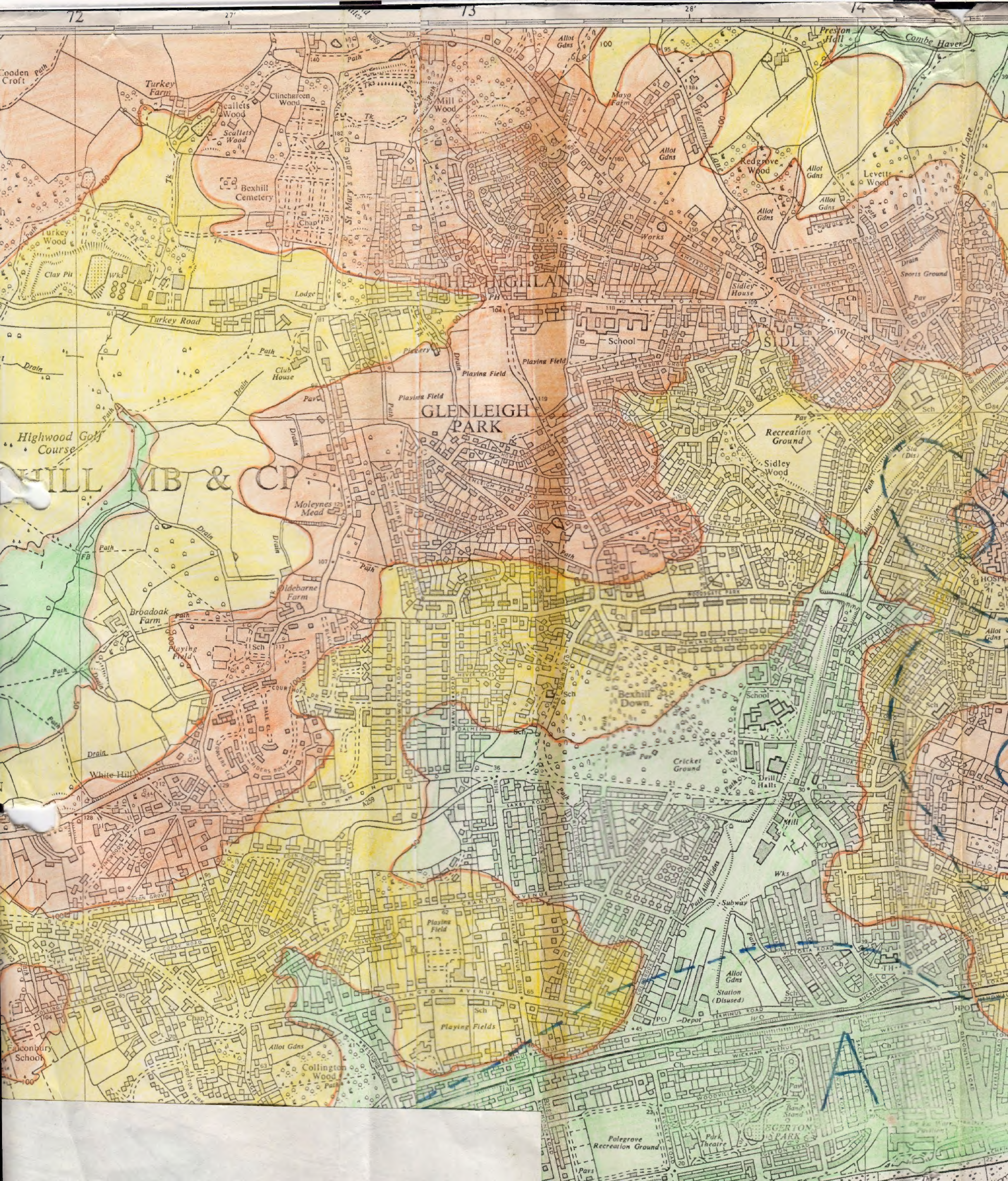
MAP I.1

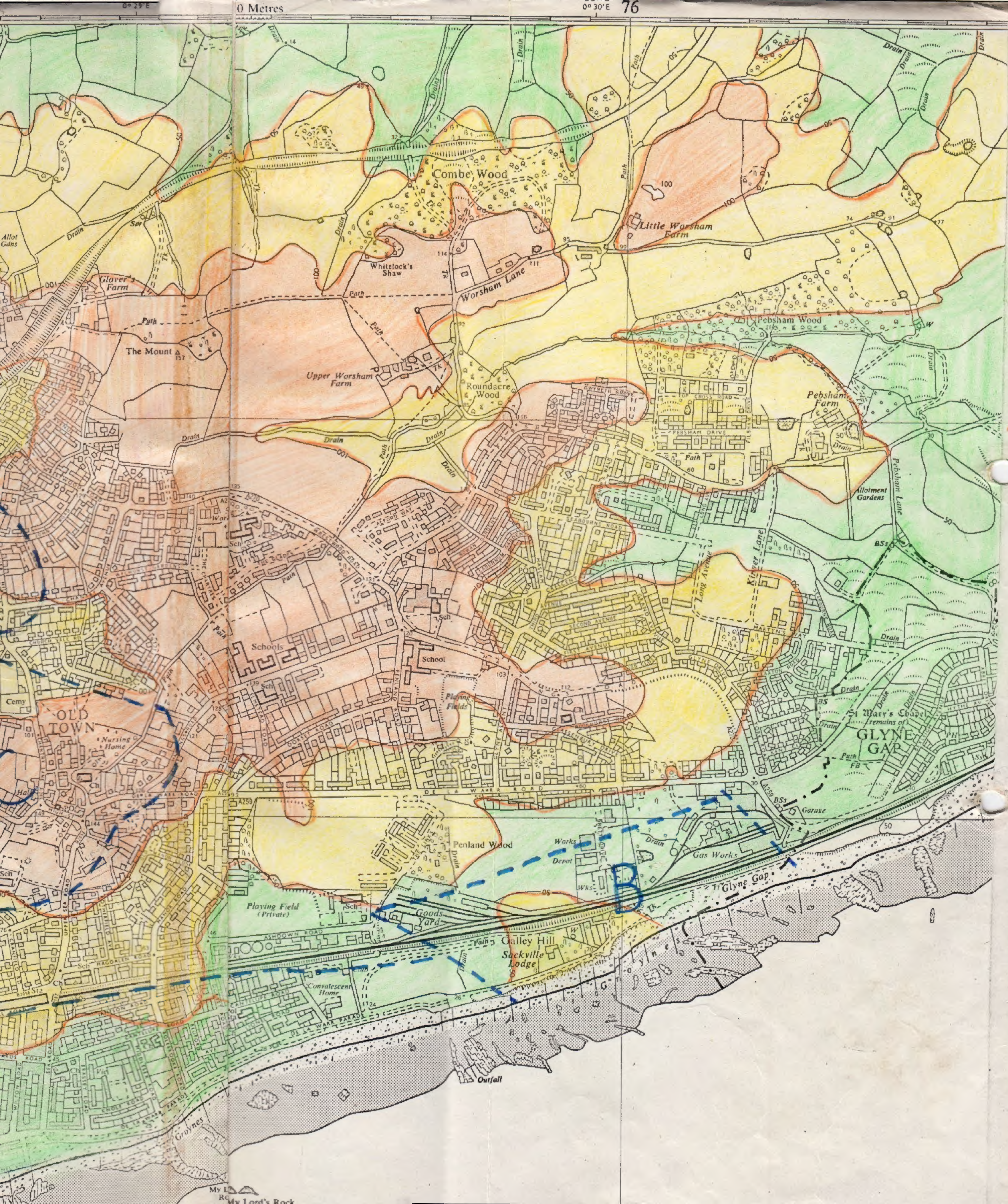
Relation of settlement to Relief and Geology

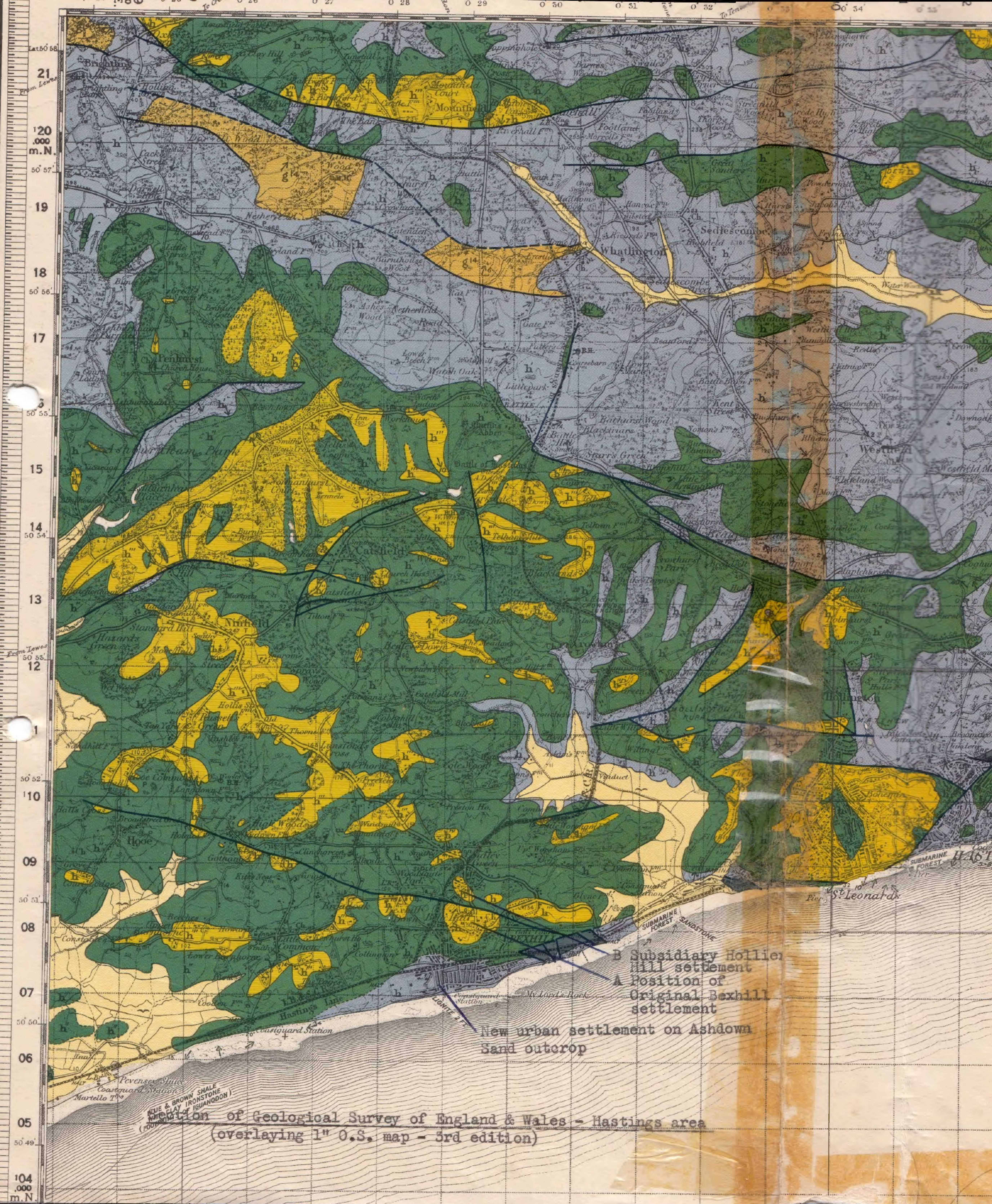


Scale: 6 inches to 1 mile

Source: Ordnance Survey First Edition
Ordnance Survey 1968 Edition
Geological Survey of England & Wales, Sheet 320









EXPLANATION of Geological Signs and Colours

Blown Sand
Alluvium

Average thickness
Scale: 1 inch to 200 feet

Tunbridge Wells Sand

Wadhurst Clay

Ashdown Sand

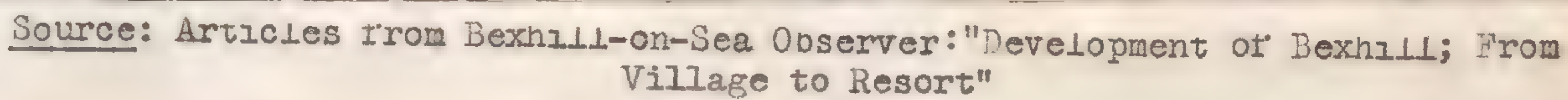
Fairlight Clays

Purbeck Beds

LOWER CRETACEOUS

UPPER JURASSIC

- + Horizontal strata.
- ↙ Dip of strata, the angle in degrees.
- ⤴ Anticline.
- * Syndine.
- Blue lines are faults
- Geological boundaries
- Boundaries & faults where uncertain are shown broken.
- ⊙ B.H. Bore
- ⚓ Ironstone



CHAPTER I
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The original settlement of Bexhill (Bixlea, Bexle, Becksley or Bexelei) was Saxon, the present parish church of St. Peters standing on the site of the Saxon one. In the Norman period, the manor of Bexhill Hundred was in the Rape of Hastings, the Hundred extending to about ten square miles, and covering a similar area to the present parish.

It was a typical agricultural community, as described in the Domesday Book, with much meadow land and a plentiful supply of water, the number of becks being reflected in the various place names bestowed on the village. Neither then nor since has Bexhill suffered a shortage of water, but ironically, it was the contamination of the wells which was an important factor in the growth of the modern town in the 1880's.

The early settlement of Bexhill was on an outcrop of Tunbridge Wells Sand (see map I.1, area C) in which there were pockets of underlying Wadhurst Clay (the predominant rock of the area); the water trapped by these enabled wells to be successfully bored. The same clay pockets contained iron nodules which provided raw material for the Weald Iron Industry, and which later contributed to the health-giving properties of the water, and also proved to be a consideration when piped water supplied the town.

It can also be seen from map I.1 and its overlay that a subsidiary settlement to the north of the village (Holliers Hill) is also located on a higher area, and both of these can be correlated to Tunbridge Wells Sand outcrops. The Holliers Hill group of dwellings (map I.1, area D) was subsequently one of the first to be developed during expansion in the 1880's.

There was an agricultural decline after the Napoleonic Wars, especially in Bexhill, which housed a garrison of German troops for

some years during the conflict. The barracks, accommodation for officers and the parade ground occupied the area west of Bexhill village, and north of the lane joining the village to the subsidiary settlement of Belle Hill (see map I.2). The latter was largely built in conjunction with the garrison's temporary occupation, but with the cessation of hostilities, the garrison returned to Germany, and with the exception of a few houses, the barracks, parade ground etc. were razed to the ground. This may account for the space between Bexhill and Belle Hill, but the position of the garrison's occupation is shown on the map. Some wooden buildings were retained, however, and housed the National Infants School; the boys and girls National School had already been established north of Bexhill village.

The fall in the demand for grain caused a reversion to grazing in the area, but with the increase in demand from the industrial towns built during the Industrial Revolution, a relatively prosperous period followed. However, this was short-lived, since the extensive development of the grainlands of America and Europe caused a fall in demand for home-grown grain. This fall in prosperity was an additional factor in the imminent commencement of urban growth, since it coincided with the development as a health resort, Earl de la Warr's plans for developing his estate and the necessity for an improved drainage system. Records show that, up to about 1880, the rural characteristics of the village had not been disturbed, with farmland being part of the village; this can be seen in map I.2 where Cheeseman's Farm and Chantry Farm are on the periphery of the village.

Sea Lane, running due south from Bexhill village to the coast, was the boundary (both physically and psychologically) between the two town developments to be carried out later. Before the construction of the railway, coal was obtained by collection from a collier which put ashore at the bottom of the lane, but later it was collected from the

coal-yard by the railway. The climb to the village with fuel, especially in inclement weather, must have put great strain on the horses.

There was a narrow bridge over the railway in Sea Lane (see map I.2 (A)), but other access to the grazing land south of the railway was via cattle arches at Marine Cottages (B) and Sackville (C) just west of the coal-yard, as well as one further west (just off map I.2). The grazing land was liable to flooding, partly due to access by the sea and partly due to the western half (Pole Grove etc.) being fed by streams from the upper part of the parish, and which were virtually open sewers. Even today, the Polegrove (now containing football, rugby and cricket pitches) is subject to water-logging as is Egerton Park to its east. The 1873 edition of the 6" O.S. map overlay on map I.1 shows clearly the position of the "area liable to floods" in relation to the present Egerton Park and Polegrove, as shown on the latest edition of the 6" O.S. map.

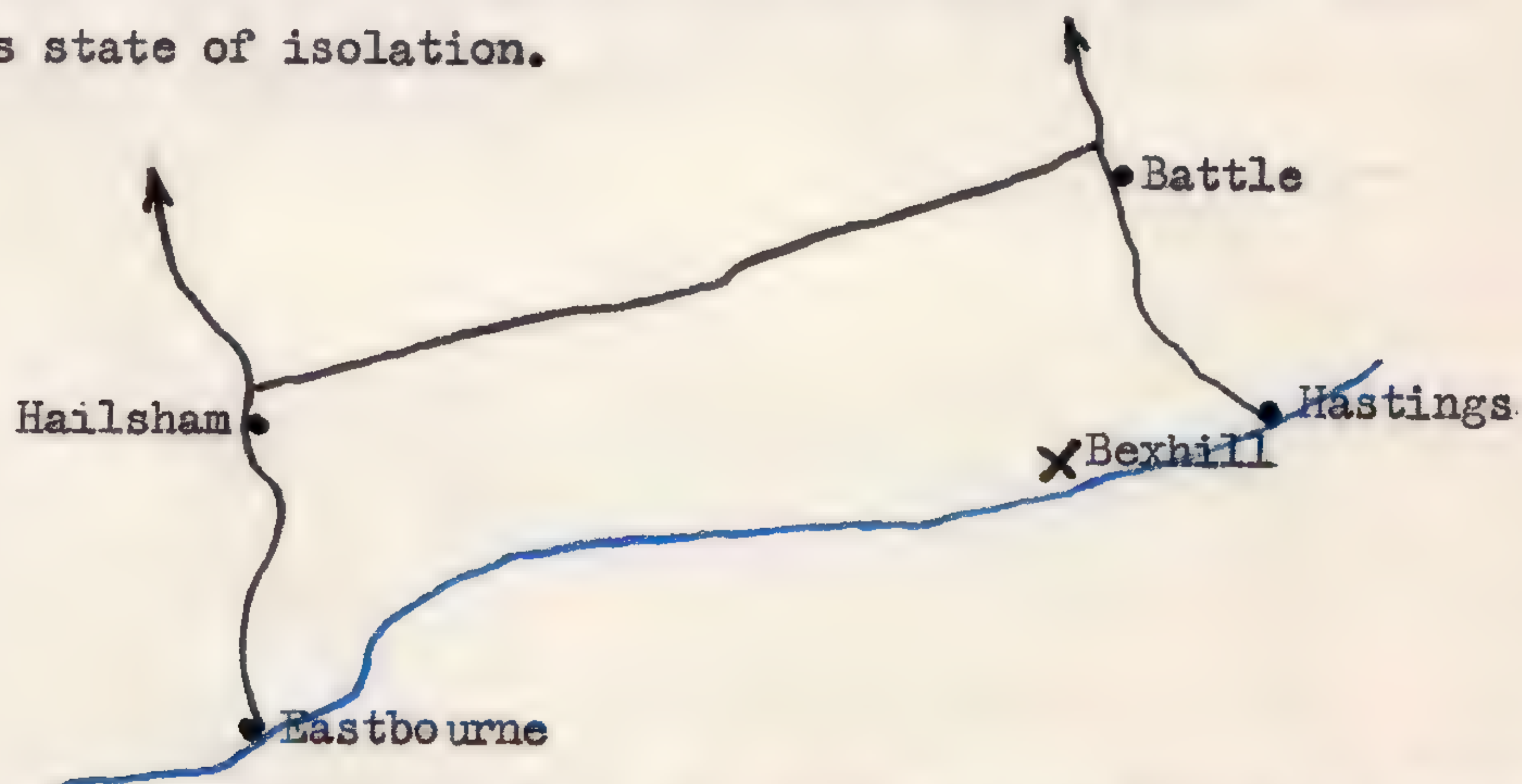
The coastguard cottages and Lane End House were the only dwellings south of the railway, the former being situated on the Horn (which had accommodated a Martello tower destroyed in 1870), a slightly raised section of the coast. According to a gentleman born in one of these cottages, at times of high seas and heavy rainfall, the only way to reach the area north of the railway was by wading across. The various coastguard cottages were built to combat extensive smuggling activities in the area after the Napoleonic wars, but the duties of the coastguards were transferred to the Beachy Head station early in the twentieth century, and the cottages demolished to make way for the building of the Colonnade in 1910.

The Holliers Hill settlement, already mentioned, contained St. Johns and St. James roads, already with names, these being the first roads to be adopted by the Local Board (formed in 1884), and laid down in 1895. Wakehams Farm was soon surrounded by new dwellings, but the

farmhouse still survives and is incongruous amongst the Victorian and Edwardian buildings surrounding it. The junction of the two roads, Holliers Hill and Haddocks Lane can be taken as the northern extremity of Bexhill, since the village of Sidley is just to the north. For the purposes of this study, Sidley and Little Common, although under the jurisdiction of Bexhill Corporation, will only be mentioned in general terms, since they are still considered communities in their own right, particularly by their inhabitants; they still retain characteristics of village settlements, and could well be the subjects of separate studies.

The transition from a rural village to an urban settlement was rapid when it did commence, but retardation in development was due, not least, to poor communications, and it was several decades before Bexhill developed on a scale comparable with its more progressive neighbours - Hastings and Eastbourne.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Turnpike system and stage coach routes were at their peak, the construction of roads on these routes being vastly improved. Turnpike roads, however, did not reach Bexhill, and on early (eighteenth century) maps, the village was described as "on unattached crossroads" south of the main road, which illustrated its state of isolation.



The main Turnpike routes are shown in the above sketch-map, those from Eastbourne and Hastings being via Uckfield and Battle respectively.

With the advent of the railways, however, communications with other coastal settlements became easier, one of the first railways being constructed along the south coast in 1846. Unfortunately, Bexhill village was a good half-mile from the railway, and was also at an elevation of 150 feet above it. There was only a halt on the salt-marsh strip on the coast, the station not being built until development took place - in 1891, in fact. Two main lines from London were built to Eastbourne and Hastings in 1847 and 1852 respectively, thus excluding Bexhill from the main routes. A spur line into Eastbourne in 1871 improved Bexhill's accessibility to London, but this was not entirely satisfactory (see Chapter III). A more direct line to London (a branch from Bexhill joining the Hastings/London line at Crowhurst, some seven miles distant) was not completed until 1902, by which time the rapid increase in population of the watering-places of Eastbourne and Hastings were firmly established. In spite of this, however, the importance of the railway in connection with the town's development cannot be over-estimated, and will be discussed more fully later (Chapter III).

With the railway running on the lower land of the parish, eventual development was inevitable, but it proved to be several decades behind its neighbours, as the rate of growth of population compared with that of Eastbourne, for instance, shows. Between 1851 and 1881, Bexhill's population hardly rose, but Eastbourne's had already increased seven-fold. Only between 1891 and 1901, was the increase comparable.

	<u>Population of Bexhill</u>	<u>Population of Eastbourne</u>
1851	2026	3433
1861	2011	5795
1871	2051	10,361
1881	2245	21,595
1891	5602	34,278
1901	12,213	42,701

(Figures from H.M.S.O. Census for East Sussex)

Eastbourne's popularity as a watering-place on a railway terminus of a direct London route had established it as a coastal resort; in addition, the foresight of its planners (the Duke of Devonshire had laid out the west side of the town with wide avenues and villas for the more affluent section of the population) gave it further prestige. The 8th Earl de la Warr, as a wealthy landowner, as was the Duke of Devonshire, decided that the development of Bexhill should be undertaken on similar lines, particularly with the popularity of the place as a health resort and residential area towards the end of the Victorian era. Eastbourne became a high-class resort and Hastings was a Mecca for day visitors, and was developing some industry, so Bexhill assumed the "select" label and became known for small, quiet hotels, private schools, convalescent homes and a haven for the "middle class", a condition which it has retained basically to the present time.

CHAPTER IICONDITIONS FOR EXPANSION

At the time of Bexhill's urban expansion, the parish was one of fourteen included in the Battle Union of parishes (the Battle Board of Guardians), Battle (about six miles from Bexhill) being then an important market town for East Sussex. The Board of Guardians was responsible, among other things, for education and health in its parishes, and it was its inefficiency in health matters which prompted some of the prominent landowners in the Bexhill area to press for a Local Board of Health.

In August and September, 1880, a typhoid fever outbreak occurred, which was caused by seepage from adjoining farmyards to several wells in the parish. There were sixteen cases and a death in the first outbreak, and there was also escape of sewer gas in many places. Sewerage drainage was primitive, with pipes (a slight improvement on open sewers, but without ventilation) running south, west and east from the higher ground of the village to be emptied on low-lying fields. The main outfall was at the bottom of Belle Hill, the waste running into an "unhealthy lagoon" to the west, the area now occupied by Egerton Park (see map I.2).

Complaints from two prominent local doctors (Dr. Wallis, Senior & Junior), and church authorities (sanitary aid work was then part of the church duties) to two prominent landowners of the time (James Walker and Samuel Scrivens, both of whom later developed parts of the town) resulted in a campaign to protest to the Battle Board of Guardians. Similar complaints were received from the Rector of Little Common on behalf of the villagers, who, as tenants, were more particularly at the mercy of the landlords, the latter objecting to extra rates for sewers and from which they would most likely not benefit).

Members of the Vestry (mostly influential citizens, and responsible for collection of rates) failed to obtain an inspector from the Board of Guardians, so a meeting of property owners and ratepayers "....for the purpose of considering the propriety of constituting the parish as a Local Government District..." was held on September 19th, 1883. The number

of votes per elector depended on the size of property he owned or rented (with a maximum of twelve votes each). In spite of pressure from many quarters for the formation of a Local Board, the voting proved to be 355 votes for the proposal, and 336 against. Although the motion was carried, the result did not show a majority decision, but it was discovered that many people owning land in the parish, but living away, together with those who had recently arrived in the area, voted against the proposal; this encouraged the local landowners to fight for the "established" residents, and a letter to the Board of Guardians stressed the need for closer home management for two reasons: i) the increasing popularity of the village as a watering-place, and ii) the consideration that any development north of Earl de la Warr's estate would have to consider trespass or negotiation with the Earl when contemplating sewage outfall to the sea.

The Battle Board of Guardians were still reluctant to improve conditions, but an independent complaint from residents in the Beaconsfield Road and Springfield Road area (two of the earliest roads to be developed - between 1881 and 1884) (see area B on map III.1) maintained that "....cesspools overflowed and ... people suffered from the smell..." The Medical Officer stated that these conditions were "...slow poisoning..." and various other complaints during the following months resulted, finally, in the formation of the Local Board in May, 1884, who were responsible for drainage, water and lighting, the latter two, however, not being publicly administered until forty years later. The Public Health Act of 1875, under which Local Boards were formed, gave further impetus to the Bexhill Local Board's formation. The need for the Local Board was confirmed by the prospect of Earl de la Warr's expansion east of Sea Lane, and the continued growth of Bexhill village itself. Earl de la Warr contemplated a piped sewage outfall to the sea, and even if the Local Board negotiated with the Earl to adapt his scheme on payment of compen-

Fig II.1



A Victorian villa, built in the early 1880's,
as an example of many built for Hastings
businessmen in Hastings Road, east of Bexhill
(now Old Town)

sation, as opposed to a separate system being built, it would have to pass through his estate to outfall to the sea.

Members of the newly-formed Board included many who had negotiated for it (Dr. Wallis, Jr., who became its Medical Officer of Health, Samuel Scrivens, James Walker, Thomas Thwaites, for instance), and no doubt their interest was coincidental with the development of the "new" town, and of which several of them were responsible!

The factors contributing to Bexhill's development can therefore be summarised as follows:

- i) The enterprise of the landowners, developers and builders.
- ii) Bexhill being chosen as a place of residence by businessmen of Hastings and St. Leonards, in preference to those already well-established settlements five or six miles to the east.
Large, substantially-built, Victorian villas were being built to the east of the village for such residents. (see photograph II.1, opposite).
- iii) As a health centre: The increasingly crowded and unhygienic conditions of the cities, particularly London, produced the need for "....an asylum in the country for the temporary residence of the convalescent and the destitute poor whose restoration to health is impracticable in the hospitals and in their own unhealthy and ill-provided homes, but may speedily be effected by pure air, rest and nutritious diet." * Persistent enquiries from medical establishments in London led to the purchase of land on the south-east rim of the village, to build a convalescent home. This was the first land transaction in Bexhill, and the beginning of the disappearance of farmland. The Metropolitan Convalescent Home was completed in 1881 for £12,000, the building being encouraged by

* Extract from the "Object of Metropolitan Convalescent Institution" produced at about this time (1880), being a charity dependent on voluntary help.

Fig 11.2



From "Bexhill-on-Sea Observer" -
October, 1966

(Articles on the Growth of Bexhill:
From Village to Resort)

a local doctor (Dr. Wills) who was interested in the treatment of tuberculosis, and which was the forerunner of several similar establishments. The building of the home was viewed with mixed feelings by the populace, not least by the businessmen residing in the opulent villas to the east of village, mentioned in ii) above. (see II.2)

- iv) The effect of railway communication: Although not on a main London route, a thousand patients per year were travelling to the convalescent home, and with a gradual increase in other travellers, the number of people using the railway through Bexhill doubled from 1878 to 1884. The importance of the railway in the town's development will be dealt with more fully in Chapter III.
- v) As mentioned earlier, there was a decline in the importance of agriculture, and this, together with other factors, mentioned in i) - iv) above, contributed to Bexhill being favourably disposed to urban development. The pressing needs for improvement in drainage and other amenities, made the time ripe for a new era to commence.

MAP III.1

Map to show periods in which various areas
were developed, from the early 1880's to
approximately 1920

Scale: 6 inches to 1 mile

Source: Downsbrough's Guides, 1884 - 1895

Kelly's Directories, 1896 - 1900

Field Survey

Valuation Lists





Construction of East Parade - 1882/3

Map III.1

Key



Settlement as at 1873



Early urban development:

A Belle Hill Estate

B)

C) Honies Estate

D)

E Station Fields Estate

F Fairmount Estate

G Egerton Park Estate



Extent of development to 1900



Council estates (built in 1920's)



Extent of development, 1900-1920

CHAPTER III

EARLY URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The first areas of development consisted of fingers of settlement extending from the already established nuclei as shown on the 1st edition 6" map (I.2). Both the original Bexhill and Holliers Hill settlements were situated on outcrops of Tunbridge Wells Sand in the Hastings Beds, at approximately 100-150 feet, and as such provided better areas of water supply and drainage than the surrounding Wadhurst Clay. The Belle Hill settlement, however, is at a lower altitude, and this proved to be the forerunner of the first extensive building away from the original settlements.

As will be seen on the 6" O.S. (1968 edition) map opposite (III.1), extensions were first made of Belle Hill settlement in the early 1880's (Edinburgh and Salisbury Roads; area A), the architect for which was Mr. J.Wall, who was later responsible for hotels, the West Parade and the Colonnade, and who also acquired the West Parade and Egerton Park from Mr.J.Webb for the Town Council. The Holliers Hill area (Beaconsfield and Springfield Roads), already mentioned in connection with drainage complaints, was built from 1881 to 1884 (area B, map III.1). Although these were some of the earliest Victorian structures, services were not provided, and this led to the drainage complaints. Area C on the same map was developed very soon afterwards, and this together with areas B and D, was known as the Honies estate. Due to the unusual name, extensive enquiries have been made as to its origin, but without success. It has been suggested that this was a corruption of the name of a previous landowner, but it cannot be substantiated. The name is still retained, however, in connection with modern flats in the area. James Walker was responsible for this estate, as he was for some almshouses in the area (photographs of these and of the houses built in Beaconsfield Road are shown in III.2 and III.3), and was an original campaigner, with others already mentioned, against "...unsanitary conditions and inadequacy of control exercised by the rural sanitary authority (Battle Board of Guardians)

Fig. III.2



Victorian terraced houses, built in the early 1880's -
Beaconsfield Road, part of the Honies estate

Fig. III.3



Almshouses near Beaconsfield Road, built during the same
period, some still having the original roofing.

...." He wrote to the authority that, "On one occasion when sewage overflowed on to Haddocks Hill, I took a sample for analysis, but it exploded in the office of the Local Board with a loud report.....". Pipes were laid under Haddocks Hill, but Walker maintained that these were "useless for the increasing requirements of Bexhill."

The St.James Road and St.Johns Road area of Holliers Hill, already referred to as being in evidence on the 1st edition 6" map, were adopted by the newly formed Local Board in 1884, and were the first roads to be laid down by this authority in 1885.

The Belle Hill extension was developed by Samuel Scrivens (one of the original members of the Local Board formed in 1884), who soon afterwards widened the footpath which was then the only communication between Belle Hill and the railway. This became a road (the present London Road between Belle Hill and Town Hall Square), and the area, then known as the Station Fields Estate (area E, map III.1) was developed as a professional and business centre. Scrivens sold building plots for the erection of "admirable habitations and shops", and by 1887 it was the thriving business centre of a thriving town housing, according to records, a cycle shop, pawnbroker, outfitter, laundry, baker, butcher, chemist, cornmerchants (still in existence at the bottom of Belle Hill), as well as stables, still recognisable to the rear of many shops, although now converted to workshops, stores, etc. Riding stables, utilising the accommodation, only closed down about ten years ago. The Castle Hotel, at the south end of this road, together with Windsor Road, to the west, were built in 1886. The importance of the London Road centre, however, was short-lived, since development by John Webb south of the railway provided greater attraction to new residents, and the second, and more permanent business area, was established south of the railway.

The third tentacle of development - that along Hastings Road and Fairmount Road to the east of the village (known as the Fairmount Estate,

area F, map III.1) - has already been identified as the "residential overspill for Hastings businessmen", and plots were sold by the de la Warr estates to private individuals for the erection of high-class residences. Even in the early 1880's, the plots were being sold for £250-£320, and the houses were valued then at about £500.

An additional settlement, but divorced from the cohesive pattern already emerging, was begun to the west of the town (area J, map III.1), these being artisan-type houses.

By 1883, 140 houses of various types had been constructed and 100 were in the course of being built. However, between 1885 and 1890, the greatest expansion occurred south of the railway, firstly by John Webb (the Egerton Park estate, area G, map III.1), and then by Earl de la Warr; since the affairs of these two men were linked to a great extent, it would be well to explain the conditions which led to their respective interests in the development of the town.

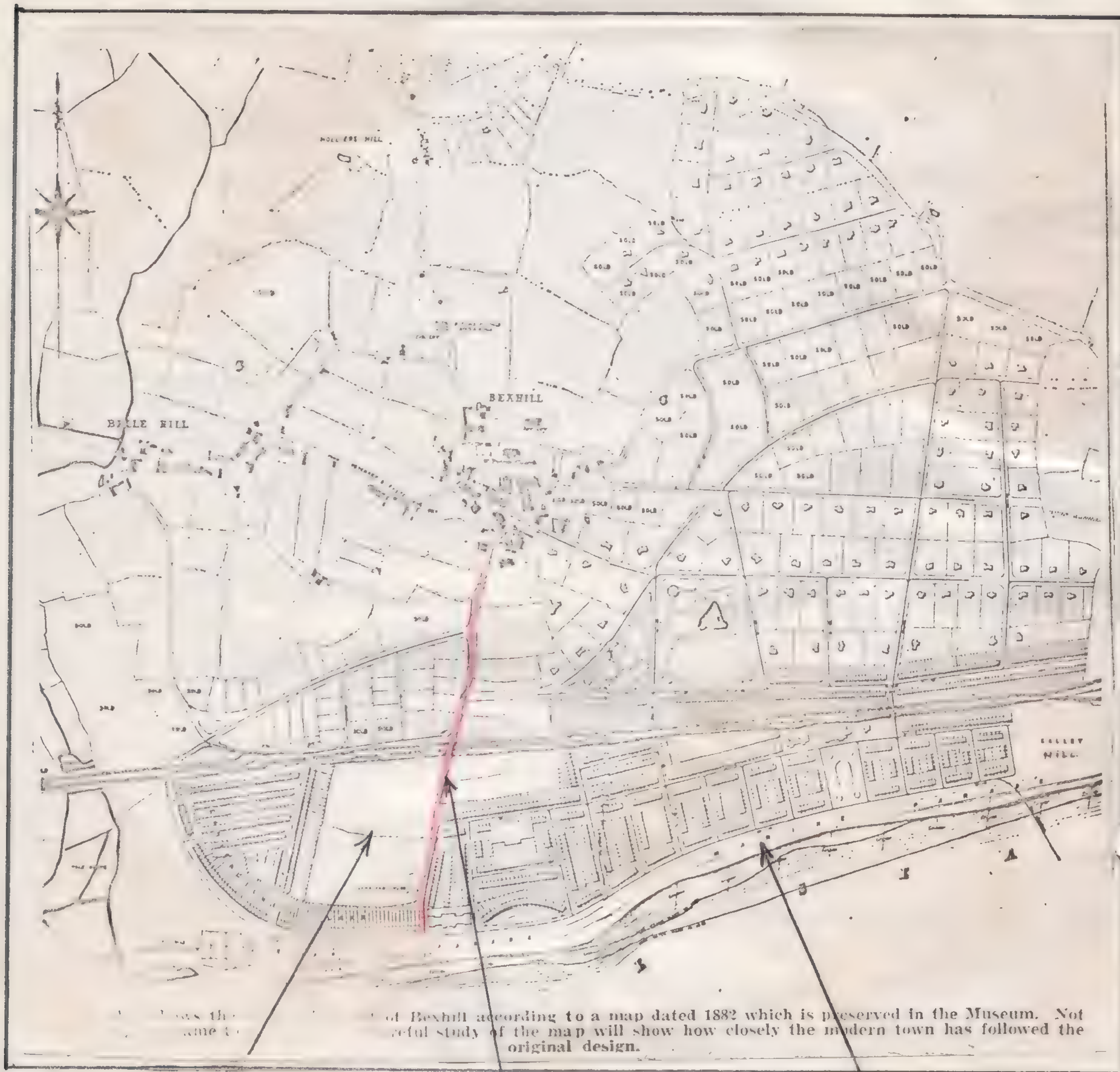
a) The 8th Earl de la Warr

Thomas Sackville, Baron Buckhurst and Earl of Dorset, was granted the Manor of Bexhill by Elizabeth I, and his ancestors included it in their properties until 1864 when an heiress inherited it. She was married to the 5th Earl de la Warr. The 7th Earl rarely visited his manor in Bexhill, living in his property at Knole, in Kent; he did, however, foster the idea of Bexhill's development, but it was left to his son, the 8th Earl, to carry this out. As mentioned earlier, the lands east of Bexhill were owned by the de la Warr family, and the first development project was the sale of individual plots in Hastings Road, east of Bexhill village.

A detailed plan for greater development was produced by the de la Warr estates (the area to be developed being shown in map III.4, opposite), but progress to the east was retarded. Many south coast towns (e.g.

Map III.5

Copy of map produced by the de la Warr estates showing proposed layout of the estate.
(Superimposed in 1873 1st edition 6" O.S. map)



Contractor's
Land

Sea Lane - boundary
between de la Warr
estates and Webb's
land!

Sea wall and
Esplanade

Brighton, Eastbourne, Folkestone) were developing westwards, development to the east being against the trend of those times; secondly, the Bexhill Water and Gas Company in Ashdown Road (see A, map III.4) did not enhance the attraction of the locality, especially as better-class residences were to be built. The Earl attempted to have the works moved, but this was not implemented, and the area to the north-east of the gas works and south of the now De La Warr Road has never been developed (B); only recently has a Catholic Secondary School and a small Industrial Estate been introduced to this particular area.

In 1882, a licence was granted in the Chancery Division of the High Court for Earl de la Warr to develop his estate by a) building a sea wall (constructed in 1882/3) from Galley Hill to Sea Lane, b) constructing the necessary drainage and other works necessary for private building, c) laying out of roads, and d) disposal of part of the estate in part payment to the contractor responsible for the building of the sea wall and esplanade - Mr. J. Webb. The importance of Mr. Webb's plans for the development of "new" Bexhill will be referred to in a later section.

The detailed map of 1882 (issued by the de la Warr estates and preserved in the Bexhill Museum) shows the proposed layout, with large individual plots to the east of the village, many of which were sold at that time, and terraced Victorian villas south of the railway designed for the seaside trade, the latter layout being much more stereotyped. The area west of Sea Lane is marked "Contractor's Land", but since this map is a copy of a reduction of the original and published in the Bexhill Observer in 1966, it is difficult to distinguish. (map III.5)

On a map of 1887 (produced in Downsborough's Guide of that year) the actual estates being developed at that time, are shown, & areas A to F on map III.1 are taken from this 1887 map. Very few of the houses on the de la Warr estate had been built at this stage, but Webb had constructed a substantial number of dwellings on his land west of Sea Lane.

However, with the sale of an increasing number of plots for both villa and terraced residences, the construction of roads, schools, churches etc. also took place. Many private schools sprung up, almost overnight, as well as additional church schools to the west of the new area. Essentials for main drainage were completed, the outfall being at the foot of Galley Hill, and to which the drainage scheme carried out by the Local Board was connected in 1886. A diphtheria outbreak in 1885, caused by water contamination, gave further impetus for the authorities to complete the scheme. At that time there were laws concerning the emptying of privvies, but there were still trenches and ditches carrying sewage over common land, and complaints to Earl de la Warr resulted in the combined efforts of the Earl and the Local Board to complete the scheme. The acquisition of the whole drainage system by one authority became necessary when it was discovered that separate systems had been installed by private developers and could not always be correlated into one system. The Board, therefore, had to assume that all land was virgin as far as drainage was concerned, and ignore pipes (sometimes untraceable) put down by individual developers. The first loan received by the authorities was in 1885 (£6,534 payable over 30 years) and the second in 1886 (£1,380) in order that the work could be carried out, the main drain being laid in the Old Town (as the original village of Bexhill was to be known), Belle Hill and London Road, and being flushed by Sidley Pond. Later, an agreement with the Earl gave the Board powers to take charge of his estate sewer and outfall, so that the town's main drainage could be connected to his system - for the sum of £1,000.

Fig. III.6



Houses built in Wilton Road, in 1890, and conveniently near the station, and included those "....on the south side of the railwaybuilt with a special eye to visitorial accommodation...."

Many of these houses are now being used for professional purposes (solicitors, accountants, dentists, doctors, etc.)

b) Mr. John Webb

Under agreement with the de la Warr estates, Webb was to build the sea wall and the East Parade, receiving half of the £34,000 need for the construction in cash, and the other half in land for development. Under this agreement, the Earl would develop south of Wrestwood Road and east of Sea Lane (see area shown on map III.4) while Webb was to develop west of Sea Lane and south of the railway, the area to be known as the Egerton Park estate (map III.4).

The first road to be laid down by Webb was Western Road, just south of the railway, this being followed by the development of Devonshire Road (the new shopping and business centre), Sea, St. Leonards, Cornwall, Eversley and Wilton roads. There was a diversified standard of dwellings since those in Wilton and Eversley Roads, for instance, were larger and of better class than those in Cornwall Road. It was obvious that the villas lending themselves to the seaside trade were near the station and the new shopping area of Devonshire Road, while the artisan houses of Cornwall Road were on the edge of the modern area. As quoted in Downsborough's Guide of 1887, "Houses on the south side of the railway were being built with a special eye to visitorial accommodation..." and were valued at from £300 to £1,300. From 1880 to 1888, rateable value rose from £13,000+ to £18,000+, the population more than doubling during that period (population in 1881 being 2,245). In the late 1880's, the infilling between Devonshire and Cornwall Roads began, together with the southwards development of Devonshire Road and a few dwellings North-east of the station. The gaps were gradually filled in during the expansive 1890's.

In the early days of the new development, John Webb realised the necessity for water and gas supplies, and in 1883 promoted a Parliamentary Bill for the purpose. There was opposition from some people that the undertakings should be publicly owned, but this was rejected, and eventually the services were in the hands of Earl de la Warr and other landowners.

The first well, resevoir and pumping station were at Wrestwood on the de la Warr estate (1886) (C on map III.4), piped water was available in 1887 and water for domestic usage in 1888. A second source was at Buckholt, two miles north of Sidley. The water flowed by gravity, but gas engines were used for pumping. As mentioned at the beginning of Chapter I, the iron content of the water was high, so that, to overcome excessive deposits and discolouration of the water, it was sand filtered. Many springs were preserved for their healthgiving properties, and one, at the junction of London Road and St. Georges Road, was known as the Iron Well.

Gas supplies were obtained from the Ashdown Road works, built in 1887 (the siting of which had postponed the development of the de la Warr estate, as mentioned earlier), and street lighting was introduced in 1888 (under contract with the Local Board). In 1888 there were 80 street lamps and 250 in 1900, in which year street lighting was taken over by the Electricity Company. Although the Ashdown Road works proved a serious handicap to the development of the Earl's estate, it had to be near the railway for coal supplies, and the suggestion that it was either moved or taken over by the Glyne Gap works only a few hundred yards away (see H on map III.1) was not upheld. It remained on the original site until comparatively recently when it was closed down - a 12-inch trunk main through the borough as part of the augmented service linking Hastings and Eastbourne making the Bexhill works obsolete. The Glyne Gap works mentioned were, until very recently, under the jurisdiction of the Hastings Corporation, and the fact that they were constructed just within the Bexhill Borough boundary was to avoid coal dues from Hastings Corporation, then $2/4\frac{1}{2}$ d per ton. These works were in full production by 1907.

c) The Importance of the Railway

When the railway was constructed from Lewes to Bulverhythe (between Bexhill and Hastings) in 1846, Bexhill was still a village perched on the hill half-a-mile from the coast, and had no direct contact with the railway; there was, however, a halt housing a coal yard and cattle pen, and while collecting coal from here was more convenient than from the beach, the occupants of the village still had a steep hill to climb with their loads.

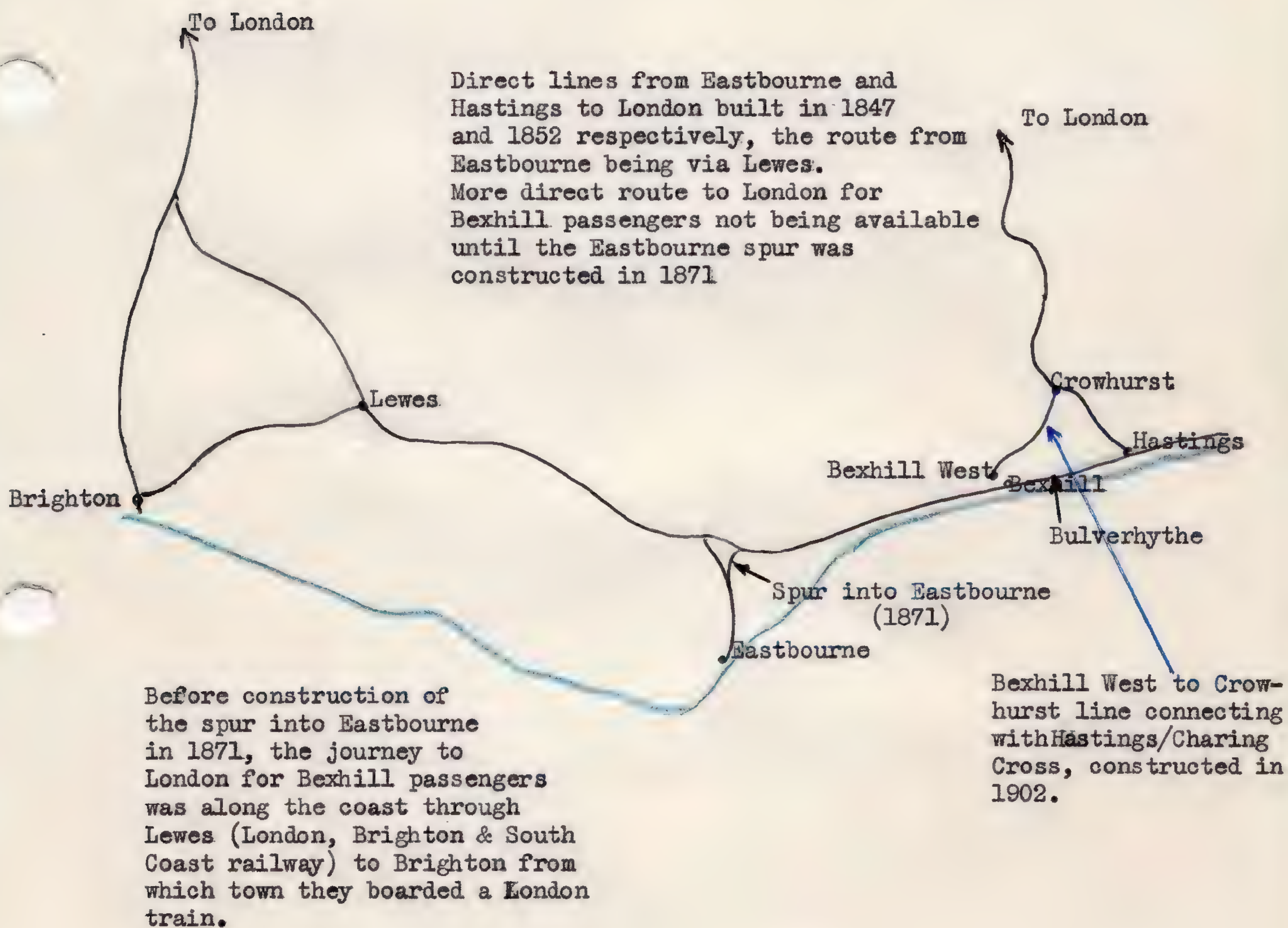
The line was extended to Hastings in 1851 but there was no connection to the main London line from there, neither was there a direct link to Eastbourne and London until 1871 when a spur carried the line into the town. Bexhill was on the Brighton and South Coast line, which went through Lewes, but there was no suitable junction with the London line which was routed from Eastbourne through Lewes.

By the time the spur into Eastbourne was constructed in 1871, both Eastbourne and Hastings were rapidly expanding, so that the impact that the railway made on Bexhill did not occur until several decades after its neighbours. However, with the improved facility, the number of passengers through Bexhill increased rapidly, and the importance of the railway from then on cannot be over-estimated, especially on its effect on the development taking place at the end of the nineteenth century.

Routing through Eastbourne was not entirely satisfactory, and increasing dissatisfaction arose, mainly through time wastage; there arose increased demands for a line to be built from Bexhill to Crowhurst (about six miles from Bexhill) connecting with the Hastings to Charing Cross line which passed through there. With the growing likelihood of the plans for this section of line being realised, demands for improved facilities on the original line were strengthened. As the new town rapidly developed, better railway facilities were needed, and, as promised by the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway during the sale of the de la Warr land, essential improvements in facilities had to be carried out.

Map III.7

Sketch map showing railway routes through and from Bexhill, indicating reason for delay in development as a coastal resort in relation to Eastbourne and Hastings.

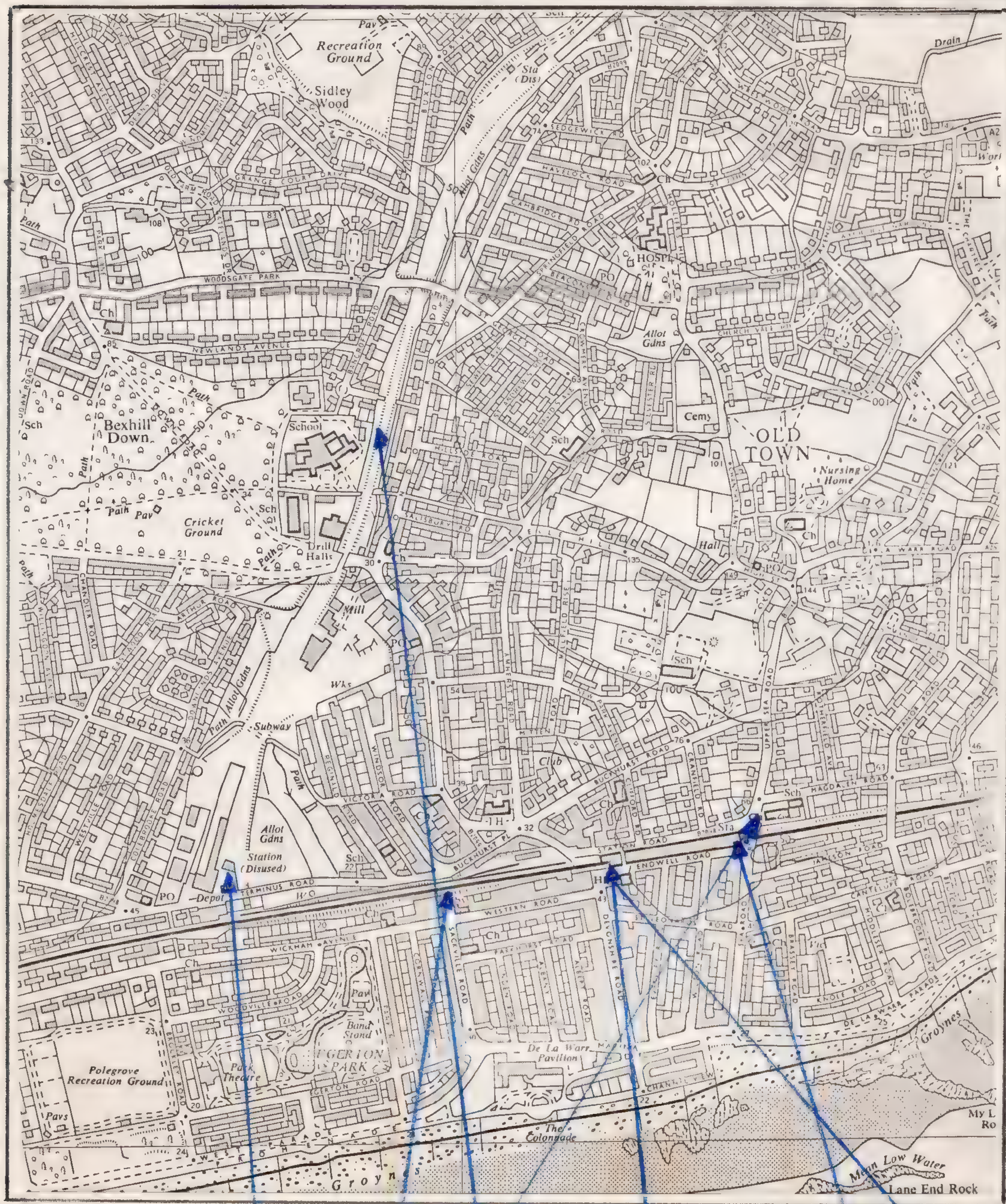


Scale: 1 inch to 5 miles

Source: History of the Southern Railway (C.F.D. Marshall & Kidner)
Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain; II - Southern England
(H.P. White)

Fig. III.8

Section of 1968 6" O.S. map indicating positions of stations & points of access



Site of Bexhill
West station
(Bexhill to Crowhurst
line closed in 1964)

Original position
Devonshire Square
of station

Present position
of station

Part of disused track

Points of access from north
of the railway line to the
south (Sea Road road bridge
and Sacville arch)

The original position of the station can be seen clearly on the 1st edition of the 6" O.S. map (see map I.2), and is also indicated on map III.8, opposite. The buildings which constituted the station before development are shown in the picture III.9, but with the "new" town development, the buildings were extended, as illustrated in III.10, the frontage then being in Devonshire Square. (On the right of this picture is the Devonshire Hotel, which was the first building constructed by Mr. Webb south of the railway).

In 1891 there were 23,000 more passengers than in 1890, and similar increases were reported yearly - due to visitors, convalescent patients and new residents to the town - but, as in many schemes connected with the town's development, delaying snags occurred. In this case, there had been an agreement with Earl de la Warr by the Railway Company to build a station to the east of the gas works, to serve his new estate. After much discussion, it was agreed that the plan was unrealistic economically for the town as a whole, and the Earl agreed that a new and larger station should be built on or near the existing site, thus being more central. At this time, too, the Earl was in permanent residence at the Manor House in Bexhill; the Manor House was then the social centre of the district, as was typical of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and many scenes of grandeur were witnessed in the town, not least the comings and goings of "the gentry" at the railway station. The construction of the new station with its 960 feet long platforms and wide covered ways was therefore, perhaps, more in keeping with those times than for present requirements.

The question of access between the northern and southern parts of the town has also been a problem (unlike Eastbourne and Hastings where the lines enter the towns in a north to south direction), which, even to this day, has not been entirely solved. At the time of the construction of the new station, the only ways to cross the line were via the narrow bridge (road) in Sea Lane (see map I.2, A) immediately to the east of the station, the road being widened at the same time as the building of the station,

Fig. III.9



Bexhill Station prior to urban development



Bexhill Station from the early 1880's until 1902. Although the frontage shown is not now in existence, the access to the railway is used by the Post Office, the Head Post Office now being in Devonshire Square.

Fig. III.10

Photographs showing original cattle arches, which provided the only access to south of the railway (apart from Sea Lane road bridge). Substitution by girder bridges did not take place until development was well under way.



Fig. III.11

Fig. III.12



Source: Copies of original photographs retained in the Bexhill Museum; reproduced by the Bexhill-on-Sea Observer in articles on the "Development of Bexhill from Village to Resort".

and via the cattle arch (map I.2, C) at the north end of Sackville Road. This was only replaced by a girder bridge in 1892, not any too soon for the development which was taking place in the area. Accesses from one side of the line to the other were made later in Manor Road (road bridge) and Westcourt Drive (where the cattle arch was not removed until 1931!); in the case of the latter, this seemed greatly delayed, especially since the de la Warr estates to the west of the town towards Cooden were being developed with expensive properties. (These two crossings are indicated on map III.1 by P and R respectively). Level crossings at S and T on the same map were removed on electrification of the line in 1935 and can be seen by the roads "stopping" on either side of the line.

To encourage development west of Bexhill, and Eastbourne and St. Leonards local service was introduced in 1905. In September of that year, it was quoted in an issue of the Bexhill-on-Sea Observer "..... the run to Cooden seems likely to prove a popular trip....the passenger finding himself in a beautiful neighbourhood - a restful picturesque foreshore on one side, and inland, lands of beauty and great stretches of pasture and woodland. The road leading from Cooden to Little Common strikes one as a choice spot for a residence overlooking the Channel and commanding expansive rural views, but it is possible that the location of the new convalescent home in the neighbourhood will not enhance its attraction for residential purposes." This forecast did not prove correct, since, in spite of the convalescent home (a second Metropolitan home similar to the first one built in 1881) and others besides, Cooden has become the most select and expensive area of the town; no doubt the desire of Earl de la Warr to build a golf course (now Cooden Golf Club) on his land to the west of the town influenced the area's development, he having "leap-frogged" the Egerton Park estate to develop westwards from the town.

Meanwhile, royal assent had been given (in 1897) for the Bexhill to Crowhurst line to be built; this section is shown on map III.7, and its

construction necessitated the building of another station (Bexhill West), since a suggested link with the coastal line was not implemented. In spite of many physical difficulties (altogether sixteen bridges, four large cuttings, often subject to slipping being cut through Weald Clay and Ashdown Sand, and a massive viaduct 417 yards long, 67 feet high and requiring nine million bricks to build it), it was completed in 1902. The new station was built on the site of Bragge's Wood, the promoters paying dearly for the land (£20,000) and water was obtained from the viaduct. Altogether a very expensive project, but the sixty miles to Charing Cross via this route made this route much more direct and quicker than the Victoria line via Eastbourne. This South-East Company further carried war into the Brighton Company's camp, since some of the traffic was diverted to Victoria on the Chatham and Dover line, by connection with the Hastings to Charing Cross line. However, a working agreement between the two companies resulted in a good service which continued for the next sixty years. With Dr. Beeching's plan to close many uneconomic lines, the Bexhill West to Crowhurst branch was closed in 1964, but not without objections from commuters, who now have to use either the longer Victoria line via Eastbourne, or to travel to Hastings to join the Charing Cross line there. For this reason, many people have moved away from the town to a more convenient point with access to a direct line to London. Since the closure of this line, the track has been ripped up (the route of the former track can be seen on map III.1 running north-east away from the town) and Bexhill Corporation have purchased much of the land formerly owned by the railway company (for £130,000) in order to develop a small Trading Estate (see area V, map III.1). This will be dealt with more fully in Chapter VI.

Also with the closure of the Crowhurst branch line, the viaduct referred to above, was blown up, since the British Railway, Hastings Corporation or Bexhill Corporation could not be responsible for its upkeep. There was a great deal of correspondence in Sussex and National newspapers against this move, but in May, 1969, the structure that had taken two years to build was demolished in the matter of seconds. ~~and historic picture of~~

Although the railway was responsible for the rapid growth of Bexhill at the end of the nineteenth century, one feels that certain snags which arose (a comparatively late direct route to London, initial position of settlement in relation to the railway, delay in improvement of station facilities due to Earl de la Warr's suggested plans for an alternative site, access from the northern part of the town to that south of the line) prevented smooth development.

In more recent times, the closure of the Crowhurst line may have more far-reaching effects than is realised at present. At the moment, Bexhill is a "retirement" town, but the lack of efficient arrangements for London commuters (at present they either travel via the longer route through Eastbourne, or change at Hastings for the Charing Cross line) could deter the younger age group settling in the town.

CHAPTER IVTHE TOWN'S SEA FRONTAGE

Since the first conception of Bexhill as a watering-place, the importance of the frontage was in the minds of the early town developers. Earl de la Warr began the development of the eastern part of the town by first thinking about the sea wall and promenade, and the contraction of the work to J. Webb by the Earl was one of the earliest agreements. As mentioned earlier, Webb was to build the sea wall and East Parade for the Earl, and for which he was to receive half the payment in the form of land which he (Webb) was to develop west of Sea Lane. The parade, and the one later constructed to the west, were not only aids to the town's amenities, but a necessity for its actual existence.

The geological structure of the coast was such that much erosion was taking place; the modern town is constructed largely on an outcrop of Ashdown Sand (see A on map I.1), but to the west, the Wadhurst Clay and western extremity of the Ashdown Sand appear as low cliffs (at an elevation of 20 feet to 50 feet), and where slipping and gullying, as well as erosion by the sea, cause a rapid recession of the coastline. Where the promenades have not been built, protective measures have been taken to prevent further erosion, and to the west of the town, where there are many expensive properties on the cliff itself, protective concrete walls are built on the cliff face; examples of these protective measures are shown in photographs IV.1 and IV.2.

To the east of the town, at Galley Hill, the cliffs are of Ashdown Sand and Fairlight Clay, which in themselves are subject to erosion; this particular area is further affected by faulting, and a great deal of slipping and gullying is evident. (Photograph IV.3). It is reported that as much as 500 feet of these unprotected cliffs (South Cliff, Galley Hill) have disappeared since the eighteenth century; old prints and photographs of

West Cliff

Fig . IV.1



Concrete facing to cliffs

One of many groynes on
the foreshore of Bexhill

Fig.IV.2



Ashdown Sand
"ledging"

Evidence of
slipping

Concrete
protecting
walls

Fig.IV.3



Concrete
protective
walls in
gulleys

Extensive
slipping
(with
vegetation
cover)

Ashdown Sand

Extensive
gullying

Ashdown Sand and Fairlight Clay cliffs
at Galley Hill

show the height and extent of the cliffs to be appreciably altered.

Furthermore, the low lying land south of the railway, now contained by the East and West Parades, was subject to flooding during bad weather and periods of high tides, and this would have increased had the continual erosion of the low cliffs continued.

On the 1st edition 1" O.S. map (IV.4), the coast is shown as a series of small cliffs interspersed with lagoons, making it uneven. The Martello towers are shown as still being in existence, e.g. at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Bexhill village being shown as the German garrison headquarters. During the nineteenth century, many of the towers were destroyed by the encroachment of the sea (Numbers 45, 47, 49, 51-53) while Numbers 46, 48 and 50 were demolished for various reasons (firing targets, for instance). Number 46 was destroyed to make way for the Coastguard houses, which themselves were not removed until the present de la Warr Pavilion was built in the early 1930's. The tower on Galley Hill collapsed in the early years of this century to the beach below. The only survivor, a third of a mile within the present Corporation Boundary with Pevensey, is shown on map IV.4 (No.53).

The present coastline, shown on map IV.4, is generally further north than the early one, but with the coastline straightened. It is interesting to note that the 1st edition 6" map (1873), if overlain on the current 6" O.S. map, shows the present coastline to be south of that of a century ago, indicating the reclamation of some coastal land and the protection of it by construction of the sea front promenades. An interesting point is that the lagoon shown in the extreme south-west corner of the 1st edition 6" map can be correlated to an area immediately south of the present Polegrove, and which is still a derelict low-lying piece of ground (see map map I.1 and overlay). Only recently has this been bought for development, but at the time of writing, building had not commenced. No doubt a good deal of foundation strengthening will be

Fig. IV.5



Copy of an original photograph of the ornamental gates dividing the eastern part of the town from the rest. Built in 1895 and removed in 1913, they formed the entrance to the de la Warr estate.

The Kursaal is also shown, this being the social centre during the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

(Published by Bexhill-on-Sea Observer - March, 1970)

necessary.

At the end of the last century and the beginning of this, violent storms had scoured the beach considerably (there were no groynes then), and subsequent coastal erosion (some 90-100 feet in parts of the west cliffs) made the construction of a sea wall imperative. After Webb had built the East Parade for Earl de la Warr, he planned a similar frontage for his Egerton Park estate, constructing the branching roads at the same time. However, the permanent construction of the roads was not implemented until the Urban Council (formed in 1895) took over the responsibility for Egerton Park, west promenade and foreshore. The West Parade, half-a-mile long, with bandstand, shelters and seats, and with a drive 35 feet wide, was built at a cost of £10,000, and completed in 1903. Further storms in 1910 caused a great deal of beach scouring, with the result that the parade collapsed and several bastions destroyed. A new wall from the Clock Tower to the end of the parade was completed in 1911, but in the same year a three-day storm destroyed the section east of the Clock Tower; this was also rebuilt with a deeper wall.

When the Urban Council took over the responsibility for the West Parade in 1901, the section between this and Earl de la Warr's East Parade was still in the hands of the Admiralty; this was the section known as The Horn and which contained the Coastguard cottages. The Council had, however, acquired the short section between here and Earl de la Warr's parade (Channel View) in 1907. An arcade and bazaar were built in 1901 behind Channel View, but it was not until 1910 that the Central Parade was built, the bluff (The Horn) being excavated to build this and the retaining wall for the handsome Colonnade. (See Map IV.9 for Development of Sea Front).

Up to this time, the East Parade in the de la Warr estate, had been separated from the rest of the town by ornamental gates at the west end of his parade. (see picture IV.5) This "fashionable end" of the town housed hotels, ornamental gardens, cycle and motor tracks and the Kursaal

Fig. IV.6



This picture of the cycling track, on what is now the East Parade, gives a good idea of the early days of the town south of the railway, with the sea wall constructed by Mr. John Webb, which was the first step towards building development there. The late Victorian vogue for cycling was eagerly taken up at Bexhill and a cycling club was formed in August, 1889. The chimney in the background of the picture was at the gas works.

Fig. IV.7

Source:

Bexhill-on-Sea
Observer articles
on the "Development
of Bexhill from
Village to Resort":
reproduced from
original photographs
in Bexhill Museum.

Official Programme,
3D.

BEXHILL-ON-SEA
2nd ANNUAL
GRAND AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL

• CYCLING •
TOURNAMENT.
OPEN TO THE WORLD.

Patronised by THE RIGHT HONBLE. EARL DE LA WARR, IN
The Manor House Grounds,
BEXHILL.

PRIZES **£250** VALUE.

BANK HOLIDAY, Aug. 2nd, 1897.
Commencing at 1.30 p.m. Gates Open at 10.15 a.m.
Under N.E.C. Rules.
Admission 1/- 1. Reserved Entrance 1/- extra.
Carriages 2/6.

None but Officials allowed inside the Course.
The Officials reserve the right of altering any event in the Programme.

WALTER P. WATKINS, Hon. Sec.
"Chronicle" Office, Bexhill-on-Sea.

Printed at the Typographical Works, Bexhill-on-Sea.

ABOVE.—In 1896 and the following year two memorable cycling tournaments were held in the Manor House grounds, where Magdalen and Manor Roads now are, and the above illustra-

tion (reduced in size) shows the front page of the 1897 programme.

- an ornamental Pavilion which was the centre of social life, and where concerts, dances, parties, exhibitions etc. were held. Cycling tournaments were held in the Manor House grounds, as well as on the East Parade, from the 1880's until the turn of the century (see IV.6 and 7), and international motor races were held from about 1902 for a short period along the parade and up to Galley Hill (see IV.8). The motor races were all the more attractive since they were held on private property allowing unlimited speeds! Speeds of over 70 m.p.h. were recorded even at that time (in "hotted up" models) - 1907 - but the opening of the Brooklands Track soon afterwards caused the international motorists to change their venue. The track on the East Parade closed soon afterwards.

Increasing radical opinion in the growing town, however, objected to this part of the town being separated from the rest and not in the town's control, and increased pressure finally caused the Earl to succumb and in 1913, the whole of the front finally came under the control of the Council. The ornamental gates were removed, and the psychological breach between the two halves of the town was healed. Even then certain residents in the eastern section wanted the Council to purchase the Kursaal as well, but the Council maintained it was only worth its site value. The building, however, was maintained privately until 1933, when a compulsory purchase order from the Council gave it control of parades and buildings - fifty years after the commencement of the frontage. The Pavilion (as the Kursaal was later called) was finally battered and destroyed by the sea, and the Sailing Club now occupies the site.

The encroachment of the sea, in spite of sturdy sea walls, has necessitated the building of numerous groynes, which are the joint responsibility of the Bexhill Corporation and Sussex River Authority. These are being constantly repaired and replaced since the action of the sea still causes excessive beach scouring.

The history of the sea front is shown by annotations on the current street map of Bexhill in IV.9.

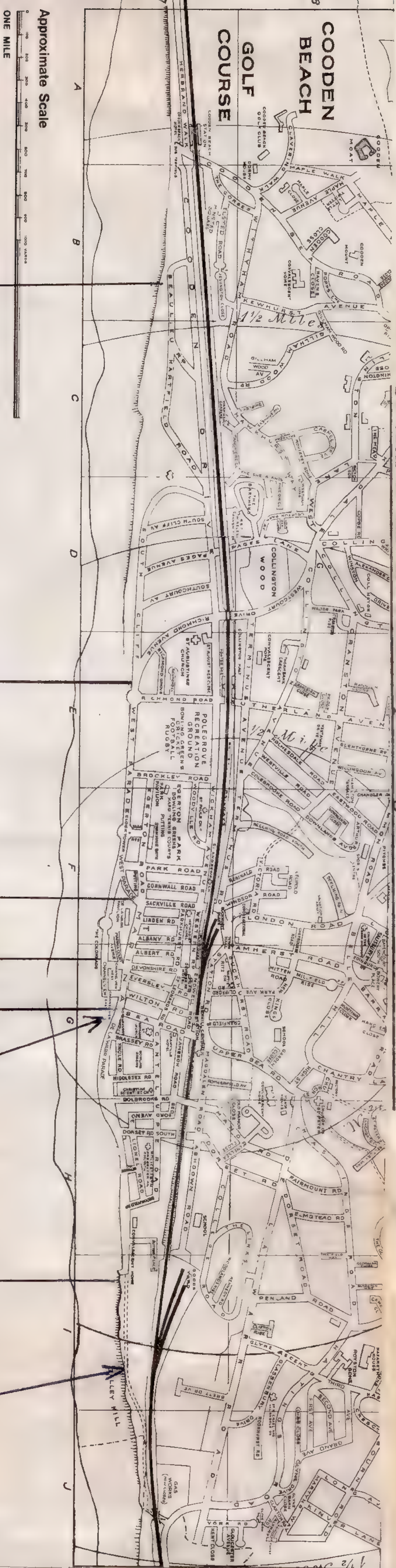
Fig. IV.8



A competitor taking the rise of Galley Hill in his stride at one of the town's early motor meetings which attracted thousands to the East Parade.

Photograph reproduced by Bexhill-on-Sea Observer from an original held by Bexhill Museum. Included in series of articles on the "Development of Bexhill; Village to Resort" produced over a period from 1966 to 1969

Section of current street map showing Bexhill-on-Sea sea front



West cliffs, including South Cliff, subject to erosion and slipping
Intensive groyning to prevent excessive beach scouring

West Parade, built constructed 1903 by Council Rebuilt 1911

Central Parade & Colonnade (formerly the Horn).
Constructed by Council - 1910

Council - 1907

East Parade, built 1882/3 by J. Webb for Earl de la Warr
Taken over by Council in 1913

Cycling & Motor races held from 1880's until 1902

Site of Kursaal, later known as the Pavilion; purchased by Council under compulsory purchase order - 1933.
Now site of Sailing Club

Galley Hill - erosion & slipping still taking place

CHAPTER V

EXPANSION

By 1890, all the new areas shown on Map III.1 were being developed rapidly, particularly the Egerton Park estate. By that time, both the Devonshire Hotel, immediately south of the station, had been built, as well as the Sackville Hotel, a very large building on the East Parade in the de la Warr estate. Building had started north of the railway (Buckhurst, Cranfield Roads etc.) and also the associated buildings for a developing community, including churches of all denominations. Building societies, estate agents and other professional bodies were flourishing, as depicted by glowing advertisements in the Town Guides of the time. There were several private schools already, as well as convalescent homes and "rest homes for gentlefolk". The first private school (Holmwood) was built in Hastings Road - the "select" area east of the Old Town, and this was the forerunner of many such establishments in this area. Their fortunes have varied over the years, but this will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. Advertisement for the thriving town can be quoted from the Bexhill Chronicle Guide, Almanac and Directory for 1888 - "Come to Bexhill and LIVE"; one wonders how many cynics in the town would agree with that today.

During the 1890's, the expansion south of the railway was particularly rapid, and from the two maps V.1 and V.2 it may be seen exactly how much progress was made between 1896 and 1900, when the two maps were published. (These were both copied from maps in Kelly's Directories for those years). On the 1896 map, little of Earl de la Warr's estate had been developed even then, in contrast to the almost completed roads on the Egerton Park estate. (The two pictures V.3 and V.4 show stages of development in this particular area). Egerton Park itself had been laid out, a satisfactory answer to the poorly-drained area once described as "an open sewer" and collecting ground for drainage from the older parts of the town. The fact that the park is at a lower level than the surrounding roads indicates the original level of the land.

Map showing extent of development - 1896

Scale: 9 1/2 inches to 1 mile

Map V.1

MAP OF THE TOWN OF LINCOLN



Pictures showing early development south of the railway

Fig. V.3



Photograph taken from position of present de la Warr Pavilion showing the Devonshire Hotel in centre, with first buildings in Devonshire & Western Roads (marked A, B and C on map V.2)



Albert Road (D on map V.2); photograph when about half completed. The type of roads and pathways of the time are shown.

Fig. V.4

The London Road (Station Fields estate) development had been linked with the Egerton Park estate by the building of the Town Hall (in 1895) in which year the Urban Council was formed; one of the last acts of the Local Board was to purchase the land for this purpose, while the Urban Council purchased the land in Town Hall Square for the gardens, in 1897. Soon afterwards (1900) the land north of the town was purchased (St. Mary's Lane) part of which was used for the Cemetery, and which has been enlarged over the years. As mentioned earlier, Egerton Park also came under the Council's control in 1902. (The area occupied by the Cemetery is shown on map V.5, A).

Town Hall Square also housed the newspaper office and bank, as well as the Victoria Hall and Bexhill Institute, both of which were centres of social activities. As well as the church schools in the Old Town (whose numbers did not effectively change during the expanding years), two more church schools were built south of the railway to cater for the increasing population of that area.

In the de la Warr estate, the Earl had catered for even the small populace then in the area with hotels, gardens, tennis courts and a cricket field. The Golf Links, which had been reduced in size between 1896 and 1900, were obviously not adequate as time progressed, since Earl de la Warr made the move to develop the Cooden estates as a larger centre for the sport. The road plan is more widely spaced as befitted the more prosperous occupants of the villas built on that estate. The Kursaal and bandstand, both additional social attractions, are shown on both maps (V.1 and V.2), as well as the Cycling Track, which has already been mentioned in connection with the Sea Front.

In the 1900 map, the position of the new station is very clearly marked, the size compared with the old being quite noticeable, while shopping facilities were increasing in Devonshire, Western, St. Leonards and Sackville Roads (indicated on map V.2), the latter commencing trading in answer to the western expansion of the town.

During the last years of the century, as in many new towns throughout

the country, many agricultural workers found work in the urban settlements; Bexhill was no exception, but other "immigrants" (from London and Ireland particularly) found employment as builders, decorators, bakers, butchers, dressmakers, milliners, laundry-workers, cabinet-makers, carriage-builders, chimney-sweeps etc., and local craftsmen continued their trades as wheelwrights, blacksmiths, carriers, corn and seed merchants. Many newcomers were, of course, employed in the hotels and as domestic assistants in private homes, schools and health establishments.

In 1895 there were sixteen private schools, fourteen public houses in addition to the hotels, and many social and sports activities had sprung into existence - e.g. church clubs, Friendly Societies, Freemasons, Army contingents, cricket, football, rowing, cycling clubs and harriers.

Some of the present-day tradesmen are descendents of those who established businesses in the town nearly a hundred years ago, e.g. Pocock, butcher in the Old Town; Warburtons, corn and seed merchants, Belle Hill and Town Hall Square; Mephams, removals, who began business as carriers.

To cope with the increasing demands of the building trade, several brickworks had sprung up to the north of the town, most of them eventually closing down with the centralisation of the industry in Turkey Road, where a large brickworks are at present in production, supplying a wide catchment area (see map III.1, K)

On map V.5, the area developed up to about 1920 is transposed from map III.1 for convenience. In addition, inter-war development is shown, with almost completely a westwards expansion; as mentioned in Chapter III, the de la Warr land in the Cooden area was being developed with high-class residences in conjunction with the erection of the Cooden Beach Golf Club, originally established by the Earl; in the 1920's and 1930's more and more houses were built and corresponding roads laid down along the whole of the town's frontage and south of the railway line. At the same time, Cooden itself was growing, and scattered residences were also in existence outside

the area shown; Little Common village itself was at last emerging from the purely rural state which it had maintained, and with the improvement in the Barnhorn Road towards Eastbourne, a typical ribbon settlement arose in this area (map V.5, B). Similarly Pear Tree Lane, from the village northwards, produced another such development with a spur (Wealden Way) at C. In spite of Little Common's growth during this period, as well as post-second World War development, it still retains village characteristics; it has not been so absorbed into Bexhill, as has Sidley, due, no doubt, to the slightly greater distance from Bexhill and also the natural physical barrier of White Hill. (This ridge of higher land can be seen on the west of map I.1). All the same, much in-filling has occurred recently (D on map V.5), but this is discussed more fully in the next chapter.

In the town of Bexhill, one or two areas were excluded in the general trend of expansion, the area north of the Down (the open space in the centre of the map) being the largest; this, however, was developed very soon after the Second World War, as was the area just north of the Old Town. The tongue of "empty" land to the west of the Old Town was developed even later, construction probably being delayed due to the slope of the land being comparatively steep. Since I live in this area, I can vouch for this being a valid reason!

The dwellings erected during the inter-war period were essentially of a different type to those built in the early days of the town's development. The family house, which could be run more economically and easily, was in favour, and in the 1930's, the "small semi-detached" became fashionable, as did the bungalow. Areas E, F and G/^{and H} on Map V.5 contained either one or the other, or both, and were forerunners of additional estates of this type built after the Second World War. The large area to the west of the town developed in the inter-war period, although not aspiring to the Victorian opulence in the de la Warr estate east of the town, did however, produce better class houses than in the four areas mentioned above. Although the pattern of rateable

values shown in map V.6 is produced from the valuation list for 1929, it can be seen that, even then, the south-western section of the town was emerging as a relatively high-class area.

After discussion of private expansion, the importance of the Council in the development of the town must not be omitted; the influence of the Council increased after the Charter of Corporation was granted to the town in 1902, and a short section on the Council's history would be useful at this stage, so that post-war developments can be understood more fully.

INTER-WARS EXPANSION.

Key

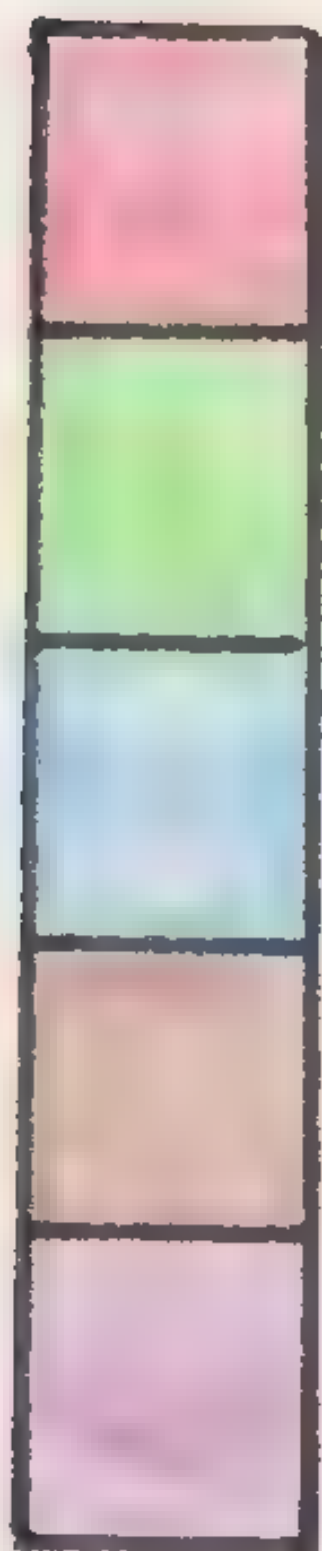


Boundary of development up to 1920

Inter-Wars Expansion

Large Private Schools

Council Property



Housing Estates (including land purchased for development)

Open Spaces (including Recreation Grounds)

Social Services

Industrial Estate

Future Requirements i) Broadoak Farm
ii) Highwoods

Scale: 6 inches to 1 mile

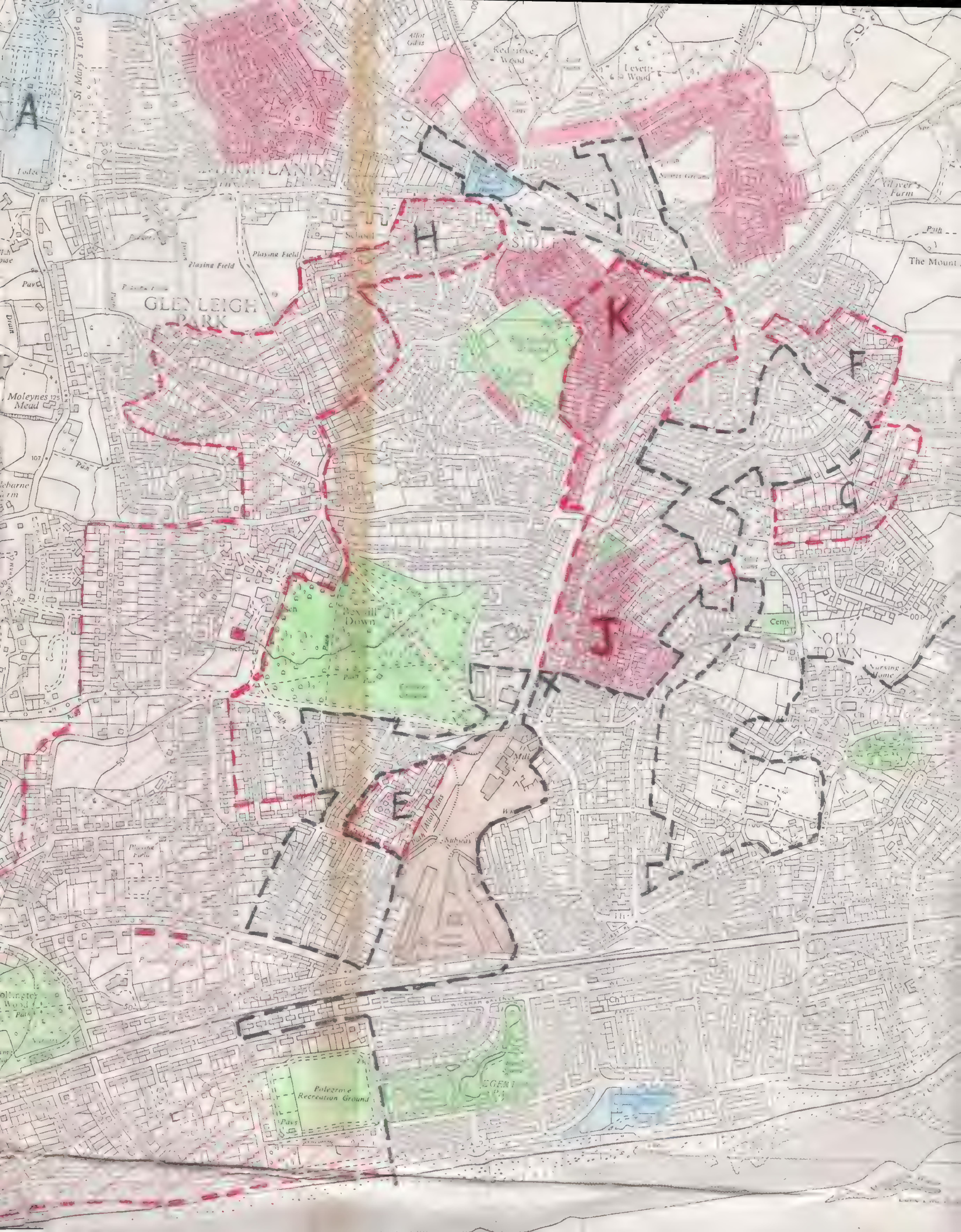
Source: Field Survey

Valuation Lists

Relevant Corporation Year Books

Kelly's Directories, 1920 - 1939





a) The Charter of Corporation - 1902

Under the Battle Board of Guardians, contributions to the district rate increased rapidly as a result of much new building, and with the formation of the Local Board in 1884, the district rate was levied by them, but the poor law rate was still administered by the Battle Board. By 1888, Bexhill, by virtue of its size, was paying two-thirds of the total poor rate, although only two people out of thirty-three were then in the Battle workhouse. As a result, the Urban Council was formed in 1895, levying the district rate, which was then 1/- in the £, the poor law rate still being levied by the Battle Board. Up to 1897, the Vestry of St. Peters assessed the district rate and were responsible for rate collection, but the increase in population (2,452 in 1881; approximately 10,000 in 1898) made rate collection by the Vestry impossible, especially when one considered that, prior to urban development, the rates were kept in a tin box! Therefore, in 1897, the Vestry agreed to the Urban Council taking over nomination of overseers.

The first move towards incorporation was not by the Urban Council, or by the landed gentry (although they took part in the local affairs later), but by the increasingly important professional and business men who, through the local newspaper, produced an article entitled "Bexhill to be Incorporated?" (Bexhill Observer, October 1898). The Charter of Incorporation, in 1902, was granted by virtue of the rapid expansion of the town and by its possibilities as a coastal resort, but not least by the influence of leading figures of the time (Earl de la Warr and Earl Brassey, the main landowners of the area) being active public figures.

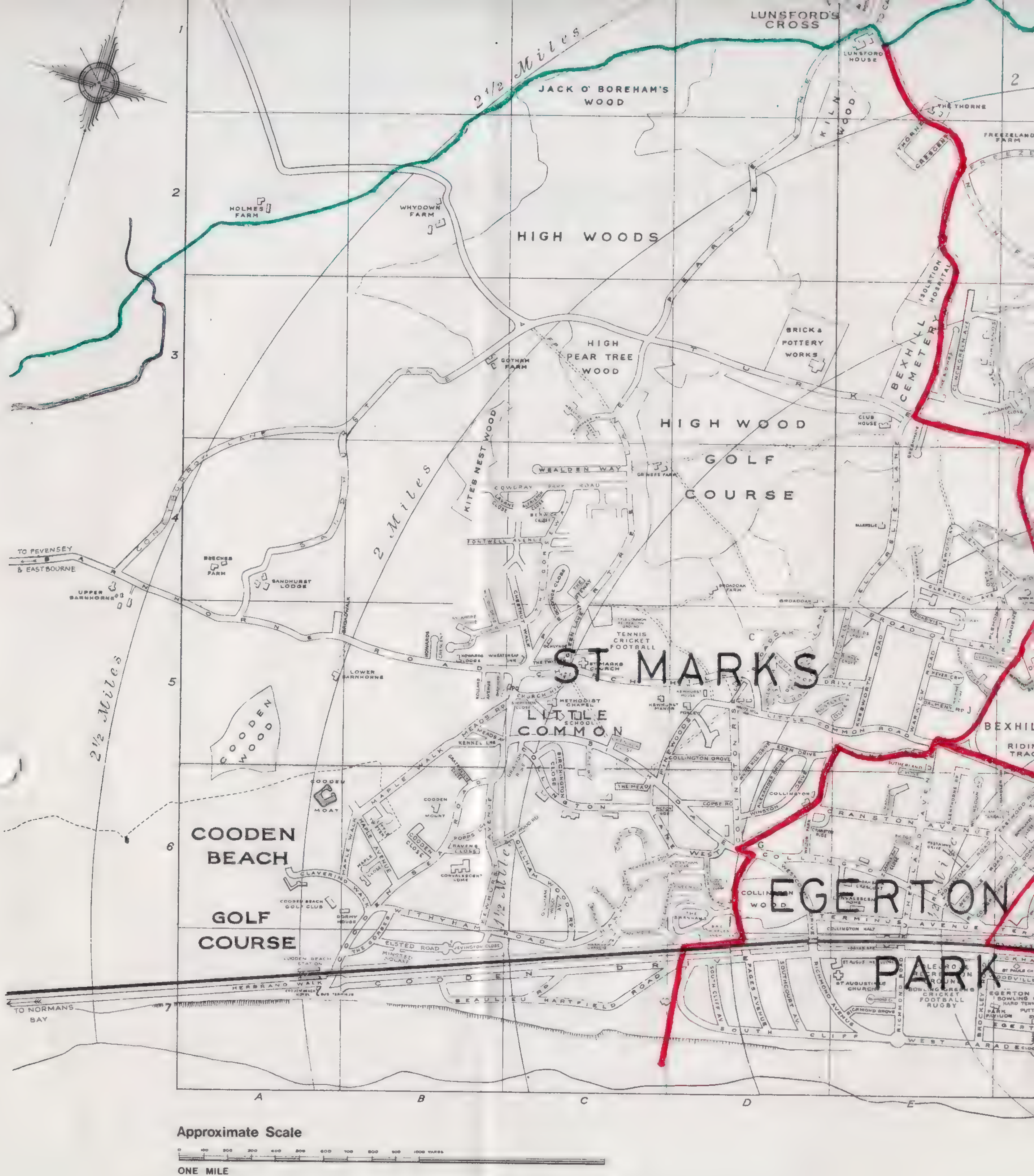
Elections for representatives on the Council after incorporation produced the first eighteen members; there were five wards in the town, the Central Ward, at that time, having by far the greatest representation; this corresponds to the area of early development (London Road business centre

and Egerton Park estate), and by virtue of its population, the Central Ward had six representatives on the Council, while the other four wards elected three each. The boundaries have been altered slightly over the years, to correspond with further development, but they are mainly unchanged. (See map V.7). The businessmen had by far the greatest influence on the town's affairs (as is the case today), and reflected a change in influence in the town; twenty years previously, the fate of the community was in the hands of the landowners, but with the increasing importance of public control, their influence weakened.

Almost immediately after Bexhill became a borough, it became responsible for elementary education in the town, ending the Church's control. Although the number of schoolchildren rose only slightly in the Old Town schools (from about 400 to 500 in twenty years), the number of children being catered for in the new part of the town was approximately 900 in 1911, compared with about 300 at the end of the century. A new Infants and Junior school had been built at the south-east corner of the Down (the town's open public space) in 1907 and 1912 (two sections) as part of the Corporations responsibility for education.

The Corporation also became responsible for the highways, very few of which were macadamised in the 1890's. The water-cart was still a familiar sight in the summer, and can be remembered by older inhabitants of the town as being in great demand at the turn of the century.

With the likelihood of the town developing northwards, the route to Sidley was still a track, not much wider than a footpath, the made-up road extending no further than Salisbury Road (point X, map V.5), and the Bexhill Observer reported, in 1903, that "The tradespeople of Station (now London) Road who look helpless as the growing decadence of that thoroughfare, know what a blessing a direct road to Sidley would be, and the people of Sidley and all owners of horseflesh prematurely worn out by the hilly nature of the wide detour of the Old Town or Barrack Road, will throw in the weight of





their influence for the same reason." (For this reason, too, the blacksmith in the Old Town was still in existence until well into the twentieth century). It will be remembered that the London Road shopping area (the original Station Fields estate) was the first business centre of the town, but with development south of the railway, its importance became secondary, and with the discontinuance of the road just north of it, its decline was accelerated. According to an elderly gentleman still living in one of the older houses at the bottom of Belle Hill, he can remember this route as still a footpath after the 1914-18 war.

The Corporation sought to increase its powers by Acts of Parliament with clauses to run omnibuses through the borough, licence public service vehicles, provide musical and sports entertainment, take full responsibility for the sea-front and most important in view of the instance above, to improve road conditions. Ratepayers surprisingly opposed these clauses, which resulted in wholesale council resignation, and it was not until the third attempt that these powers, plus responsibility for gas and water services, were obtained.

Water supplies were originally from Wrestood and Buckholt (see Chapter III), soon to be augmented, in 1898, by additional supplies from Sweet Willow Wood (three miles north of Sidley). The latter pumping station was modernised in 1936. In 1905, the Hazards Green Works (at Standard Hill, about five miles north of Sidley) was commenced, with the hope that one million gallons of water would be produced daily. As this did not materialise, the Buckholt and Wrestwood pumping stations could not be closed down, as was at first anticipated. By 1924, with the population having increased from about 15,000 to 20,000 since 1905, demands exceeded the supply. The Cowbeech bore (drilled in 1907) was therefore brought into operation.

By reason of the growing population, the Corporation turned to meeting the requirements of the residents, and this was further implemented by the Housing Act of 1919 which ".....required local authorities to look to the provision of working-class accommodation..." During the period

1920-1924, part of the London Road council estate was built (see map III.1, N and map V.5, J), and this also strengthened the need for the extension of London Road northwards to Sidley. This road was completed in 1928 after many delays, and the housing estate was extended during the period 1924-1936. Council property was also built in Little Common in the 1920's, plus a larger one in the Buxton Drive area of Sidley in 1926-32 (map III.1, M and map V.5, K). This was developed on Burnt House Farm land, immediately south of Sidley village, the farmhouse now functioning as a doctor's surgery. This project was the beginning of farmland acquisition for council development, a policy which was continued to a greater extent after the Second World War.

In conjunction with housing development within the borough, the Council has maintained the provision of public open spaces and recreational facilities. As mentioned earlier, Egerton Park became the responsibility of the Corporation in 1902, as did the Polegrove for sports activities (map V.5, near sea front), and the Down (now right in the centre of the town) was reserved for an open space in 1896. To my mind, this was inspired foresight on the part of the then Urban Council, and the area is often a haven for relaxation for the inhabitants of the surrounding urban settlement. Recreation grounds were provided at Sidley and Little Common, and Collington Wood has been preserved - the surviving section of a much larger area of woodland.

With the Corporation finally obtaining powers, in 1925, to improve the highways, much surfacing and widening was carried out; London Road was at last a direct link with Sidley, the road to Little Common being improved in a similar manner. Westwards from Little Common, Barnhorn Road was widened in 1925, and this resulted in another high class residential area (map V.5, B). This connected to the road winding across the marshes to Pevensey and Eastbourne, the marsh road later being widened and straightened; this provided unemployment relief work during the depression after the First World War. Cooden Drive, linking the town with Cooden (running just south of the railway) was laid down in conjunction with Earl de la Warr's Cooden estate development, this route being a tram track at the beginning of the century.

Expansion in the 1920's and 1930's then was essentially in a westwards direction, settlement being established more on the higher parts of the borough. By comparing map V.5 with map I.1, development up to the early part of the twentieth century was essentially on the flatter parts of the area, but the higher areas were now being utilised. Little Common grew rapidly, as did the Cooden district, and as shown diagrammatically on map V.6, this latter area had properties of highest rateable value. The first valuation lists were produced by the Corporation in 1929, and it can be seen that the block of development immediately to the west of the town (map V.5) extended northwards from an area in the centre of the town just beginning to emerge as a substantially high-class area (V.6). The development on the de la Warr estate to the east of the town maintained its high-class status, while areas of early urban development (by correlation with map III.1) have low rateable values.

At the time of the first valuation lists, both Sidley and Little Common were largely rural, although Little Common, as mentioned earlier, was beginning to emerge as another "middle class" area; much of the pre-development rural buildings are therefore scattered over the area, their rating being under £20 and sometimes under £10.

During the inter-war period, the era of bungalows had just begun, and in the next chapter, the effect of large estates of this type of dwelling on the town will be discussed, together with associated social problems.

CHAPTER VI

POST-SECOND WORLD WAR DEVELOPMENT & RELATED TRENDS

a) Modern Development

From Figure VI.1, it can be seen that the first ~~rapid~~ increase in population, and also the most rapid, was during the last two decades of the nineteenth century; this steep rise corresponds to expansion described in Chapters III and V; after this period, there is a relative levelling, although there is still a steady increase. This flattening no doubt corresponds to the national depression in the 1920's when the set-back in the building trade also affected Bexhill. This was offset, to a certain extent, by the use of many unemployed in the building of the wider road across Pevensey Marshes, mentioned in the previous chapter.

After the Second World War, however, the building boom was renewed, and a new class of people emerged - the "retired immigrants". With increased mobility and standard of living, and their need for "somewhere quiet", hundreds of retired people, during the 1950's and 1960's, toured the south coast, often over a period of years, from Cornwall to Kent, to find a suitable place to spend their remaining years. As a result, hundreds finally decided on Bexhill as a suitable haven.

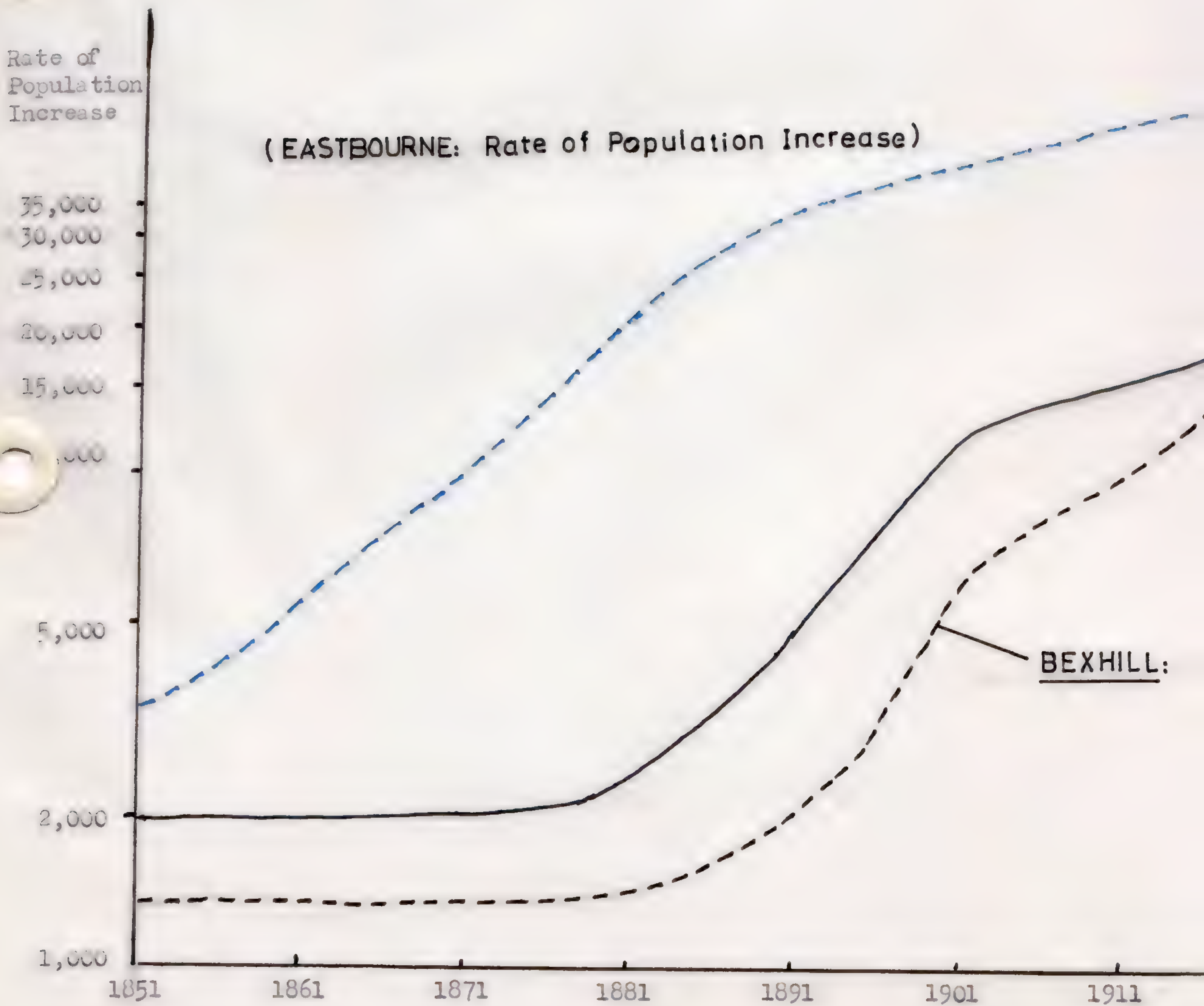
On Figure VI.1, it can be seen that there has been a steep rise in population during the last ten years, the main increase due to the immigration of this age group. According to the main local developer (Mr. R.A.Larkin), very few young families buy his properties, and of the over-60's who do, 95% originate from the London suburbs. In a recent interview with a Bexhill-on-Sea Observer reporter, Mr. Larkin said "...Most of our sales are now 'repeats' - that is, recommendations from friends to visitors from the suburbs." The fact that Bexhill is "quiet" with little industrial activity, no doubt attracts people, and they are catered for almost exclusively.

Mr. Larkin began as a sub-contractor to builders who began developing after the First World War, and to overcome periods of unemployment in the

Fig. VI.1

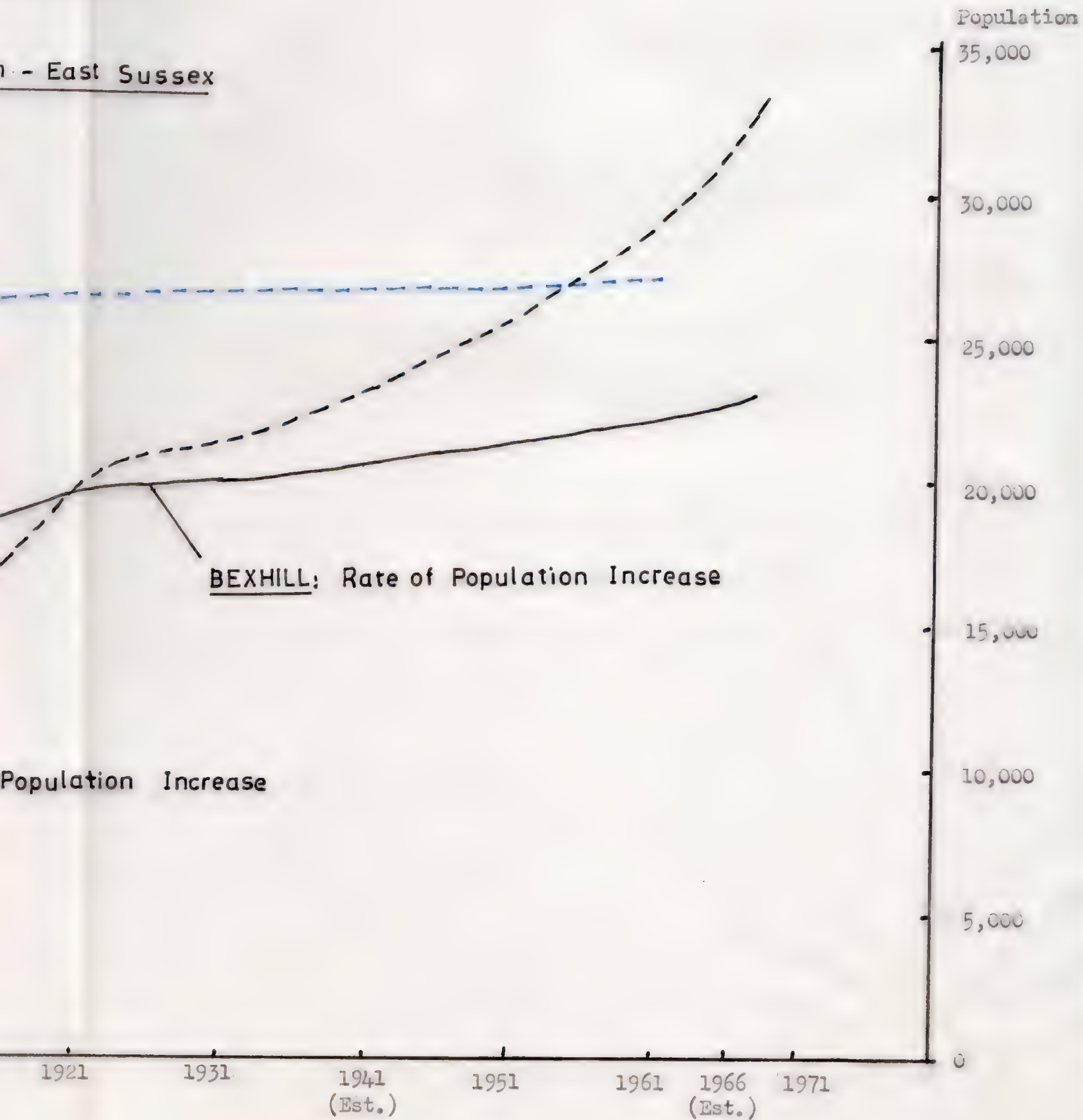
POPULATION INCREASE:

Source: Censuses of Population



1851-1970

East Sussex



St. Margaret's
Crescent

Hill Peartree

Highway
Course

BUXHILL MB

CONSEWAYS

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

WOODS

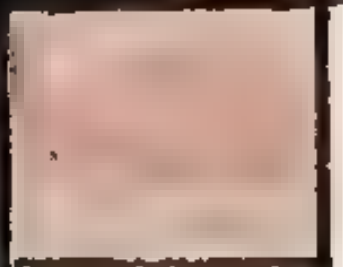


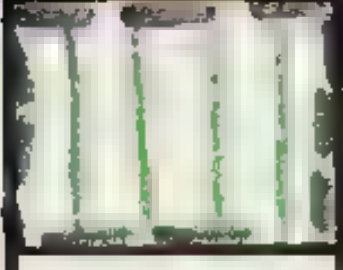

RE
GROU



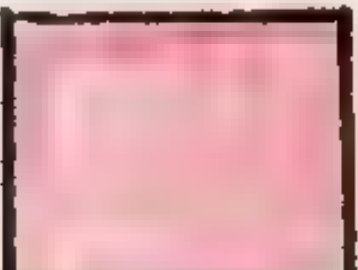
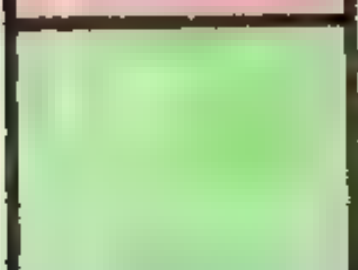
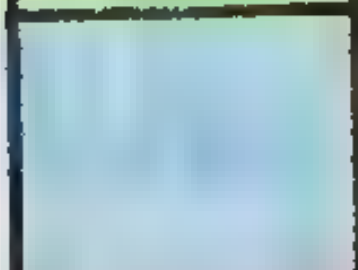
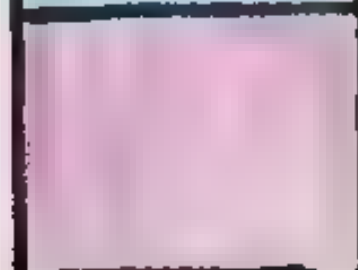
MAP VI.2

POST-WAR EXPANSION & TRENDS








Key.

	Industrial Estates (in course of development)
	Shopping Centres
	Development by R.A.Larkin, Pre-Second World War
	Development by R.A.Larkin, Post-Second World War
	Large Private Schools

Council Property.

	Housing
	Open Spaces
	Social Services
	For Future use

Overlay (Rateable Values)

	Under £75
	£75 - £100
	£100 - £125
	£125 - £150
	£150 - £175
	£175 - £200
	£200 - £300+

Scale: 6 inches to 1 mile

Source: Field Survey

Corporation Year Book 1968/9

Valuation Lists to 1969

building trade, he commenced speculative building on land which he gradually bought. Today ".....something like 85% of our work is building to contract on land that we own." From the mid-1920's to the 1930's, Mr. Larkin's first ventures are shown on map VI.2, the group in the northern part of the town consisting mainly of small bungalows and semi-detached houses. The other two areas developed during this time (Collington and Cooden) were larger houses in keeping with the higher class district to the west of the town, the development of which began prior to the First World War on the de la Warr land in Cooden. The Collington area was developed between the wars on what was the Collington Manor estate, the Whitehouse estate, in the north of the town, being built on farmland. This was the beginning of the trend to develop many acres of farmland in the post-war years, and also the use of large private estates formerly owned by the landed gentry and rich businessmen, who found it uneconomical to retain their properties.

During the last fifteen years, infilling between Bexhill and Little Common, as well as the expansion northwards to Sidley, has given Mr. Larkin, particularly, the opportunity to develop many estates for the retired population. On map VI.2, it can be clearly seen to what extent this firm has been responsible for the vast increase in the size of the town.

Highlands, west of Sidley, was one of the early post-war ventures, followed by the modern extension of the Collington estate. The firm was also responsible for much infilling in the Cooden area, as well as for many fine residences in the area west of the Polegrove and south of the railway line, this being one of the most expensive areas of the town. This can be seen from the rateable values pattern on the overlay to map VI.2, and an example of the type of house seen in the area is shown in photograph VI.4. Birkdale, complete with a wide road, now a convenient route to Little Common, was laid out during the last ten years, much attention having been given to open plan gardens with rose-tree boundaries where necessary; (see photograph VI.3). Some of this estate is still being developed, but the more recent

Fig. VI.3



Pinewoods, part of the Birk Dale development, considered by Mr R. A. Larkin as the most satisfying of the many estates for which his firm has been responsible.

Photograph from the "Bexhill-on-Sea Observer" , April 11, 1970.
(Article concerning the Larkin developments during the last
forty years).

Fig. VI.4



An example of the high class properties built in the Cooden and South Cliff areas of Bexhill.

Fig. VI.5



One of the many large private schools (this one in Collington Lane West) closed as economic liabilities. Extensive playing fields no doubt will be used for future development.

estates still are those at Riders Bolt, the Barnhams and Gorseways.

Planning permission by the council has often been an obstacle, and Mr. Larkin's policy of buying land when available (farmland, private estates, etc.) and developing it when permission is obtained, causes less delay in work. According to Mr. Larkin, "We have enough land today to last us twelve years, that is assuming that two or three outlying estates come into the zone available for building on the revised town map." One of Mr. Larkin's future estates is to be in the Collington Lane West area (north of the Hawkhurst estate, and it is likely that the playing fields of the three large private schools, now closed, (see photograph VI.5) will be developed later. Many of these large schools have been closed during the last fifteen years, as they become economic liabilities; some are demolished to make way for modern development (one or two in Hastings Road, east of the Old Town, where the first private schools were built, have suffered this fate) while others are converted for other purposes. At the present time, one is now used as a holiday home for the Workers Travel Association, another is now administered by the Inner London Council for maladjusted boys, and another is a health hydro. A few have survived, however, and the two largest, in Hastings Road, cater mainly for daughters of people working overseas or who travel a good deal.

The Larkin developments have taken place exclusively to the west of the original settlement, probably a natural extension of the first ventures, but also with an eye to coverage of all types of buildings. The Gorseways estate (north of Little Common), shown as undeveloped on the 1968 6" map, is less expensive than much of the Larkin development, and it should be mentioned that several young families are making their homes on this estate, since the property is cheaper. Little Common is expanding rapidly, and this has been accentuated by the introduction of a Grade 3 prison just to the west of the village, and the younger element from here, and from the village itself, have injected fresh ideas into the area. Although Little Common

is now virtually a part of Bexhill, it still retains many village characteristics.

Private building has not been so extensive to the east of Bexhill, but a considerable amount has taken place since the war, nevertheless. It will be remembered that the original settlement of Bexhill village was on the highest point in the parish (see map I.1), and up to very recently, there was little building on the immediate slopes round the village (or Old Town). The steepness was one factor prohibiting it, and it is understood from the Corporation Building Department that pumping the water for domestic supply was also difficult. Modernisation and augmentation of pumps for the existing supplies has alleviated the problem, however, and building is now being carried out on the higher slopes. St. Peters estate (north of the Old Town) was developed soon after the war, and Pebsham estate, which is quite extensive, has been developed by various builders over the years. Originally, a far-sighted speculator bought the whole area (which is now Pebsham) in 1932, and sold the plots for £25 each - sometimes singly and sometimes in blocks. Many private individuals bought plots for investment, and have made handsome profits as years have gone by. Recently, some of these people have sold their plots for £800 each, particularly to the Council, who have allocated an area to the east of the estate for future Council development. (This is indicated on map VI.2). On the whole, the standard of building is not so high as that on the Larkin estates, most of them being smaller - those on the northern boundary of the estate having a particularly low rateable value, partly due to their size and partly due to this area not being serviced yet. There are, therefore, more young families on this estate (e.g. bank clerks, school teachers, Post Office officials etc.) as well as a large number of retired people, of course. Complaints have been made about the inadequacy of public transport from the area to the centre of Bexhill, particularly for children travelling to school in the town. With the building of a new Primary School in the nearfuture and use of a

recently constructed Community Centre, perhaps the area will not be regarded quite so much as an outpost.

With the rise in the standard of living, causing decreasing availability of domestic assistance, and cost of upkeep, many of the older properties, particularly in the eastern part of the town (almost entirely in the area developed as the de la Warr estates in the Victorian era) have been converted to flats or flatlets, or even single rooms; the number of elderly people living on their own is a further contributory factor. Houses as shown in photographs VI.6 and VI.7 are often divided into three or four flats, or six or seven rooms, and let to mainly individuals. Facilities, such as bathrooms, toilets, laundry etc. are often inadequate, and properties converted in the area developed by J. Webb (Egerton Park estate) have similar characteristics.

Many of these large Victorian houses have been demolished by developers to make way for blocks of flats - not large, but providing anything from four to twenty or thirty flats on a site once occupied by one villa and its ground. An example of these blocks is shown in photograph VI.8, the occupants almost entirely comprising the retired section of the community, most of them coming to the town for retirement. Since most of the flats are sold from £4,000 to £6,000 each, such projects are quite lucrative.

Some of the large houses have continued to be used as private hotels (mostly residential, and for the elderly), and continuing the function of the town in the early 1900's as a health resort, - as small convalescent homes, nursing homes, health centres and childrens' homes.

As well as the extensive private development which has taken place since the war, the Council has continued its policy to meet the housing requirements of the residents. As mentioned in the last chapter, Council houses were built in London Road and Buxton Drive areas (see map VI.2, A & B), the Buxton Drive estate being extended (C) after the Second World War. Farmland north of Sidley was purchased during the 1950's and the Ingrams estate and Southlands estate (D & E, map VI.2) were developed. It can be

Fig. VI.6



Example of the Victorian houses built during the last two decades of the nineteenth century now converted to flats and rooms. These are situated on the Egerton Park estate, developed by J.Webb.

Fig. VI.7



An example of the Victorian villas built on the de la Warr estates during the 1890's, now converted to flats, rooms etc. and often in current use as private hotels, health centres or childrens' homes.

Fig. VI.8



An example of blocks of flats often built to replace large Victorian villas (similar to that shown in Fig. VI.7), and which house many retired people, many of whom choose Bexhill as the place to live.

seen that there is still Council land to be developed. Old peoples flatlets and bungalows have been incorporated in the Ingrams estate, and new ones have just been opened in Little Common. From the overlay to map VI.2, Council property can be identified as that with lowest rateable value, the oldest property in the town also falling into this category; comparison of rateable values pattern with pattern of early development shows this clearly.

The picture presented so far in this chapter is somewhat depressing, and one wonders what the outcome of such trends will be. Only recently has some industry been introduced to the town, but it is but a pinprick as far as it affects the working population, who, in effect, work almost exclusively for the needs of the retired population (services, building, professional services etc.).

b) Current Trends

Post-war expansion has increased the population from approximately 26,000 in 1948 to an estimated 34,000 in 1969, with a more rapid increase in the last ten years (see Figure VI.1). In 1951, the age imbalance does not show an excessive predominance of the older age groups (see Figure VI.9), but by comparing this with the age structure diagram for 1961 (Figure VI.10), it can be seen that there has been a great increase in the number of older persons, particularly female. This abnormal increase cannot be contributed to the natural increase in the group, but indicates the large number of immigrants, as mentioned in the previous section.

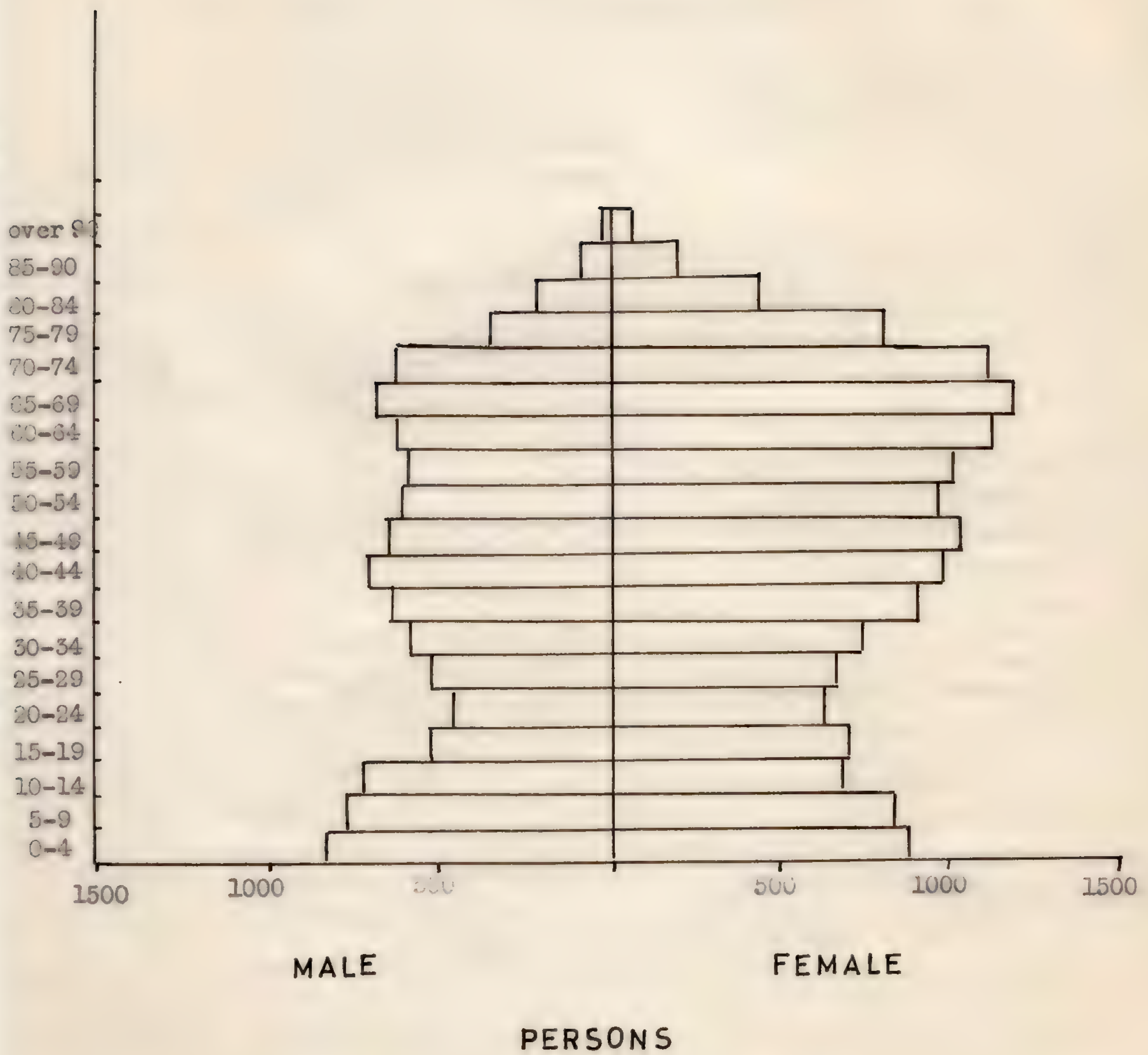
In the 1961 age structure diagram, there is a slight increase in the number of young people in the 10-19 age group, but this can be attributed to the post-war bulge, a national phenomenon. To counteract this, however, there is a decrease in the "working" age group, and this is a significant factor with regard to the town's future. The effect of the great increase in the over-50 age groups cannot be over-estimated, particularly when one considers that they are a non-working section of the community, dependent on the younger people for their welfare. As Alderman J. Baker commented, "It is the imbalance that makes it difficult to give elderly people the services they require, and if it gets out of proportion, we might find them leaving Bexhill and going elsewhere - and no young people coming to replace them." *

During the last ten years, many young families have left the town, particularly to emigrate to Australia, Canada and New Zealand, they being dissatisfied with local lack of opportunity. A comparison of percentages of the under-21 age group in four coastal towns, indicates the appreciable drop which has occurred in Bexhill, the others being more consistent. (Only a 10% sample figure is available for 1966, but this shows a similar percentage as for 1961).

* From an interview with an "Evening Argus" reporter re a computer analysis of Borough Population (June, 1968)

FIG. V1.9

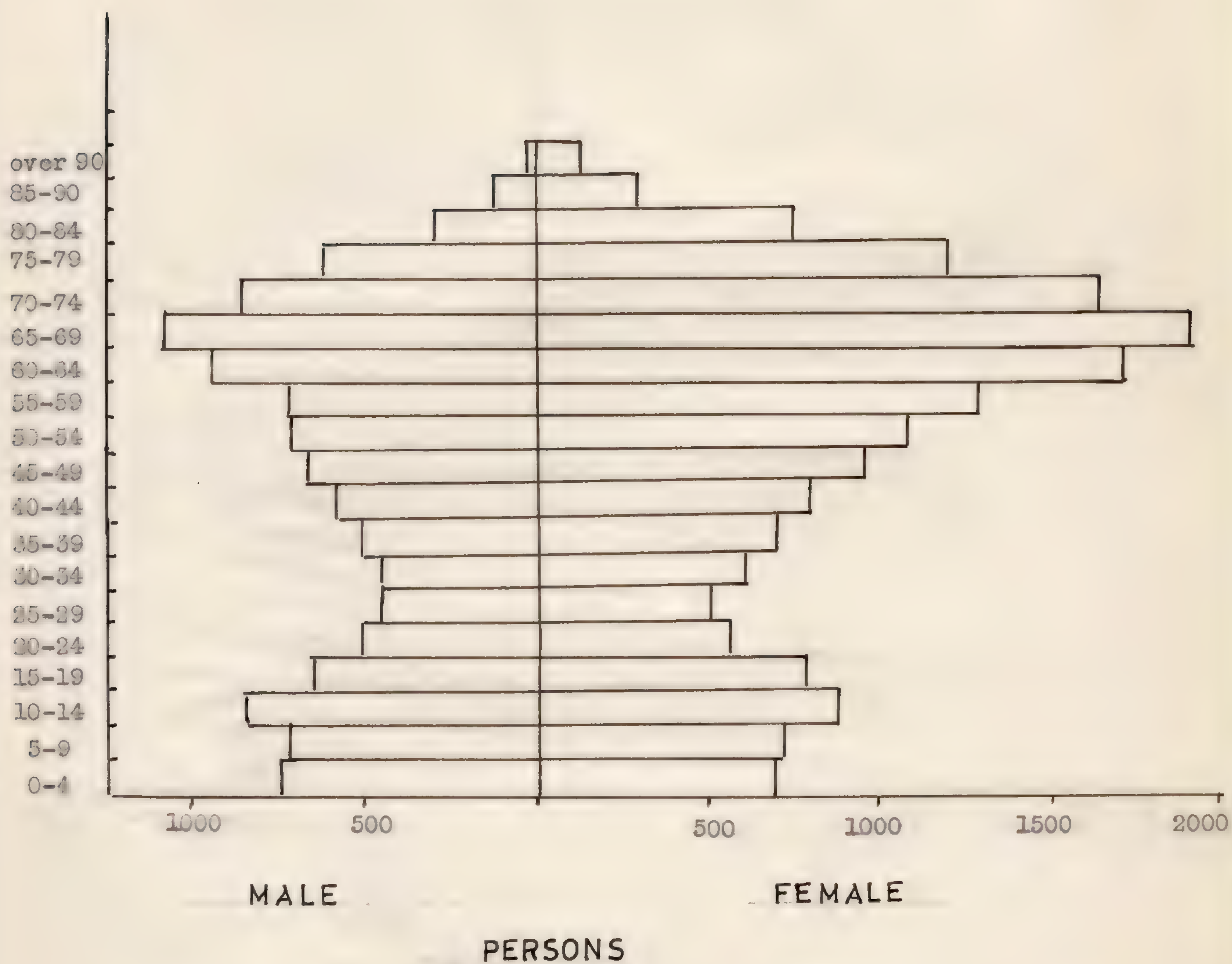
AGE STRUCTURE OF BEXHILL - 1951



Source: Census of Population, East Sussex - 1951

FIG. VI.10

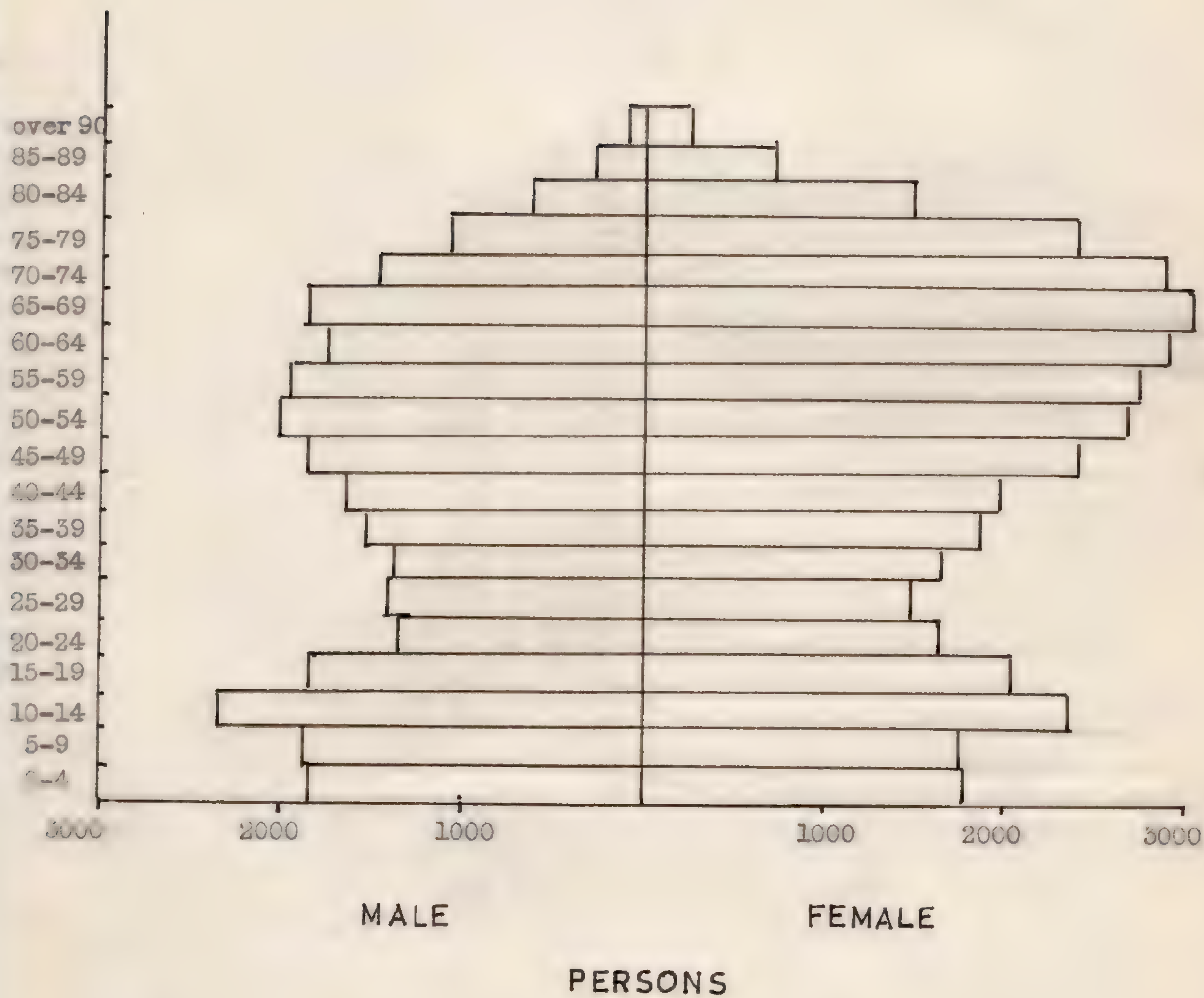
AGE STRUCTURE OF BEXHILL - 1961



Source: Census of Population, East Sussex - 1961

FIG.VI.11

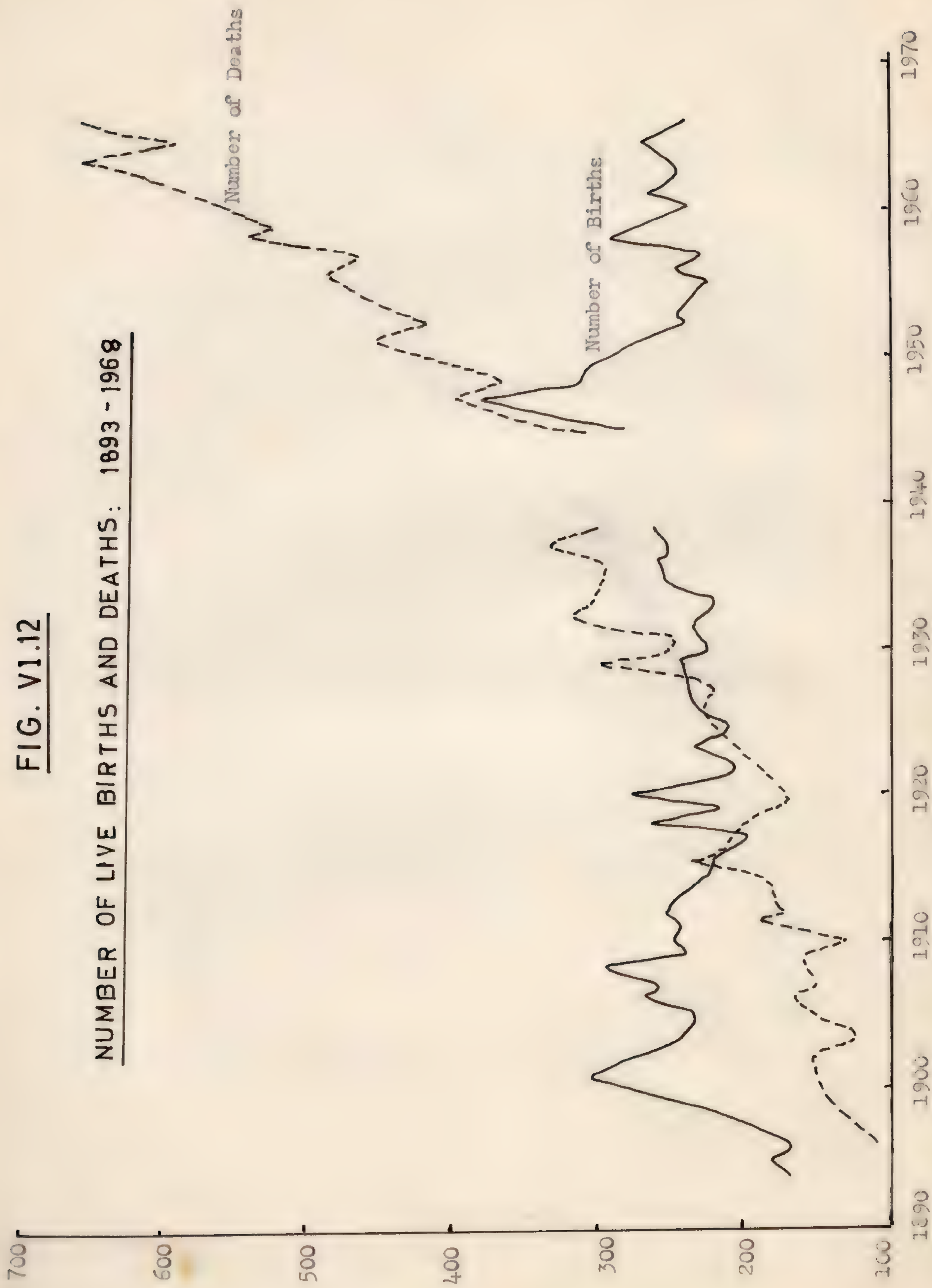
AGE STRUCTURE OF HASTINGS - 1961



Source: Census of Population, East Sussex - 1961

FIG. V1.12

NUMBER OF LIVE BIRTHS AND DEATHS: 1893 - 1968



Source: Medical Officer of Health Reports: 1893 - 1968
(Bedford Corporation)

Eastbourne	1951	23.3%) More recent figures are not available but introduction of Industrial Estates is tending to rectify any further decrease.
	1961	23.0%	
Hastings	1951	25.0%	
	1961	24.8%	
Brighton	1951	26.2%	
	1961	26.3%	
Bexhill	1951	23.5%	
	1961	20.7%	

By comparing the age structure diagram for Bexhill for 1961 with that of Hastings (Figure VI.11), it is noticeable that there is a much larger number in the "working" age group in Hastings; great efforts have been made to rectify the imbalance in that town by the introduction of Industrial Estates, and there has been much discussion as to the possibility of this town being an overspill for London in order to attract younger families. Bexhill has not gone unnoticed in this connection, and this will be mentioned again in the final chapter.

Further indications of the age trends in Bexhill can be seen in Figures VI.12 and VI.13 which are self-explanatory. Taking into account abnormal figures during and after wartime periods, it will be seen that the number of live births has not appreciably altered since the beginning of the century (265 in 1899; 250 in 1967) but the number of deaths has steadily increased. This divergence would not be so great in a balanced population, but in Bexhill's case, the abnormally high number of deaths in recent years emphasises the age imbalance. Coupled with this, birth- and death-rate graphs indicate the same trend; the increased life expectancy, control of families and increased standard of living have^{also} all contributed to these statistics.

The following extracts from the press show the concern shown to age imbalance in coastal resorts, and to Bexhill in particular.

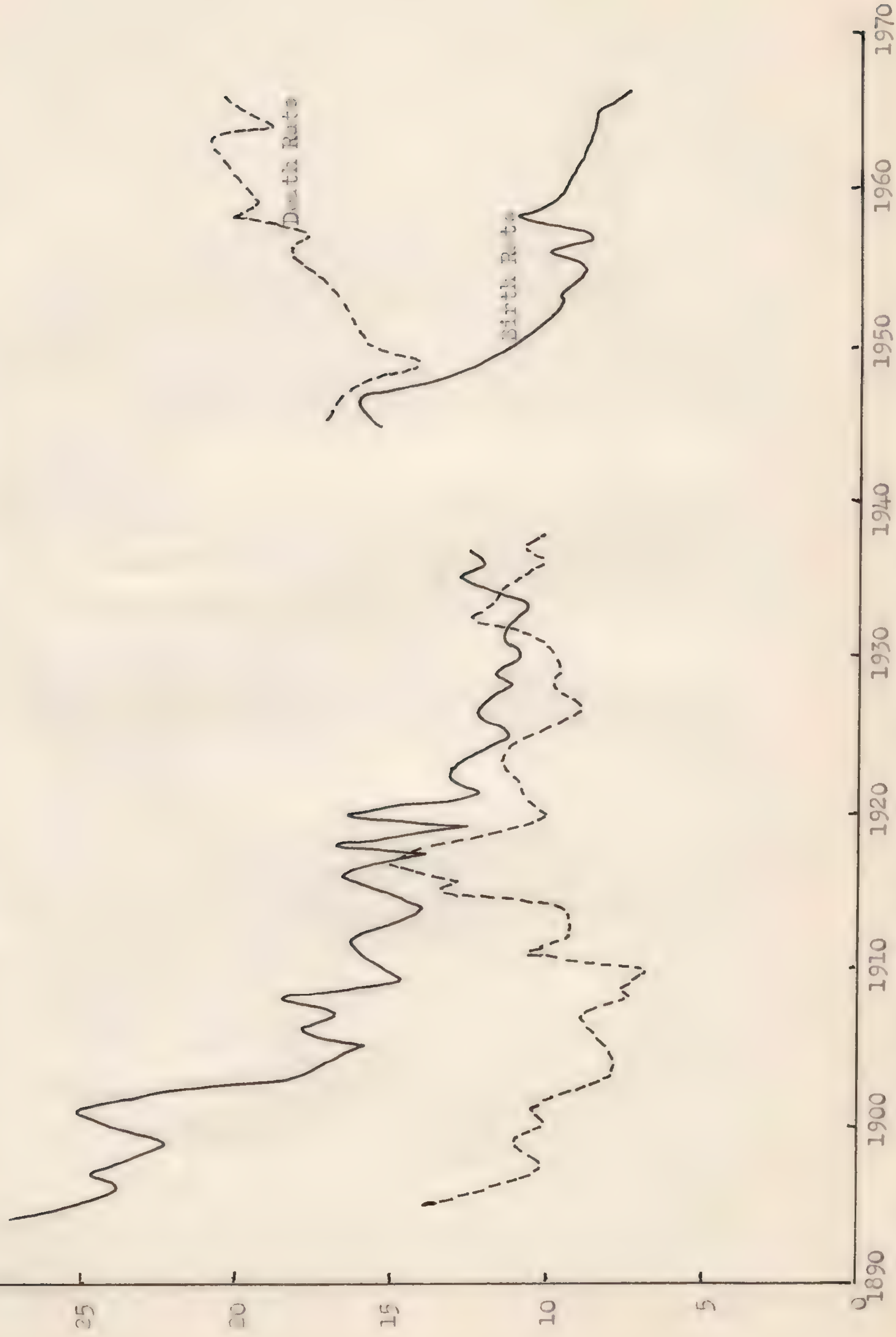
"With 44.1% of its population at retirement age, Bexhill borough led.... and has a higher percentage of its population in or above the 60's than any other coastal resort....." *

* see footnote on next page.

Rate per 1000
population

FIG. VI.13

BIRTH AND DEATH RATES: 1894-1968



Source: Medical Officer of Health Reports: 1894 - 1968
(Bexhill Corporation)

"Bexhill is....a largely middle-class town with 41.1% of men who do not work belonging to the top two social classes and only 8.3% in the two lowest." *

"Bexhill has the highest proportion of old people of any town in the country - 44% of pensionable age. It is also the highest proportion in Europe, according to a computer analysis of borough population. Says the report, studied by the Registrar General, 'If no more elderly people came to Bexhill, it would still take until 2001 to correct the age imbalance. The number of over-65'sis 8000 above the national average...." **

This high percentage of people of pensionable age can be compared to 28.9% in Hastings (1966).

Up to very recently, the Town Council had been strongly opposed to industry in the town - maintaining that its reputation for "peace and quiet" must be kept at all costs. However, the local and national press continue to report facts such as those above, and with the decrease in the numbers of the working population, many of the Councillors have quickly reversed their decisions and are now advocating the introduction of light industry. However, I feel that the decision has been made rather late in the day, and as well as being perhaps ten years too late, the extent of the estates and number of people employed are not nearly large enough to make any appreciable difference to the town's socio-economic structure.

As shown on map VI.2, there are two trading estates, of recent origin, (F & G). An optimistic remark, again by Alderman Baker *** stated "Two trading estates have sprung up, more factories are under construction, and the indications are that more young families are being attracted to the town. Local boys and girls were also being encouraged with some success to stay."

* Report in the "Times" on a survey carried out under the direction of Miss V. Karn of the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Birmingham University, on "Retirement Migration" (1968)

** From an article in the Evening Argus - June, 1968

*** Commenting on analysis of borough population.

This, I fear, is wishful thinking, since, as a result of questionnaires circulated to the firms already established on these estates, the effect on the town is insignificant.

Firstly, the area covered is only about 25 acres (Council estate (F) - 17 acres approximately and the Brett Drive estate (G) - 8), and secondly, many of the firms already established on the estates are only new premises for small firms which have been in existence in the town before, continue to employ the same people and take on few extra staff. These are traders for building materials (who employ 50 to 60 people, including office staff) (see photograph VI.14); other firms and distributors employ 10 or less people. The total labour force on the two estates is approximately 300 (235 in firms who returned their questionnaires and an estimated 60 from those who did not); 60% of the 15 questionnaires circulated were returned. A plan of the Beeching estate (that being developed by the Council on the site of the old Bexhill West station, closed in 1964 - see Chapter III(c)) is given in Figure VI.17 showing proposed sites and those already occupied. An example of a distributing firm is shown in photograph VI.15 - this one employing 12 people only.

One factory under construction on the Beeching estate, however, will be an off-shoot of a radio components firm from Newhaven and will eventually employ 200, mostly women; it will initially employ 50 people by May, 1970. It will not attract much young blood into the town, since the employees will already be living in the town, but the firm itself feels that...."Bexhill has a lack of suitable employment for young men; to attract employees, the firm would be providing transport to and from its Newhaven factory where training schemes are in operation and where there are vacancies" . If the scheme is successful and provides employment for Bexhill men, this would be a step in the right direction, but several such schemes and on a larger scale would be needed to begin to correct the age structure of the town.

The Brett Drive estate (map VI.2,G) to the east of the town, is

Fig. VI.14



F.R.Bones & Son Ltd., Wood merchants, Beeching Trading Estate (North)

Fig. VI.15



J.H.Sparshatt & Sons Ltd., Commercial Vehicle Distributors,
Beeching Trading Estate (South)

Fig. VI.17

Trading Estate being developed by Bexhill Corporation on site of old Bexhill West Station



Source: H.G.Huckle & Partners, consultants to the Town Council
(plan based on O.S. 25" map)

Scale : 25 inches to 1 mile

Key

Site 1	Hall & Co. (S.E.)Ltd.	New premises for existing local firm
2	British Radio Corpn.(Newhaven) Ltd.	
3	To be developed by Startronic Ltd. (electronic equipment mfrs.)	
4	Site for packaging firm	
5	Ambulance Station and workshop for Handicapped (under construction)	
6	M.P.Harris and Co.	New premises for existing local firm
7	F.R.Bones & Son Ltd.	" " " " "
8	Service depot for South Coast Dairies	Dairy in front of this site - already established
9	Terminus Garage	New premises for already established garage
10	Site for new Inland Revenue building	Premises at present in another part of the town
11	J.H.Sparshatt & Sons Ltd.	Distributors only for Commercial Vehicles

Also on small plots on site - offices of two local building firms

A London property firm are to build ten small buildings for sub-letting to light industries, but only one so far completed (No.11)

situated on the area of the earlier de la Warr estate which was undeveloped due to the proximity of the gas works. With the latter's closure in 1964, attention has been paid to the development of this area. Some private developers have very recently commenced building to the west, and the trading estate occupies the area as shown on map VI.2. Of the six firms established here, three are only distributors (for tobacco & confectionary, fruit & vegetables and scaffolding) while Ready-Mixed Concrete and Plant Hire firms again cater for the building trade. The remaining firm, who refused to answer the questionnaire, have an estimated 40-50 employees, some of whom could be categorised in the "young family" group; to my knowledge, however, there are several people who travel from Hastings to work here. (Photograph VI.16 shows the entire extent of this small estate).

It is interesting to note, here, that about a third of the employees on the two estates travel from Hastings daily, as part of the interchange of workers between Hastings and Bexhill. However, of the 800 (approximately) travelling from Hastings to Bexhill, 80% are employed in the service industries (shops, banks, hotel trade etc.), while of the 600 travelling to Hastings, a large percentage (including many young people) are employed in the new Industrial estates. The new Ministry of Works headquarters in Hastings absorbs 75 from Bexhill, many of them young.

It is with the trends outlined in this chapter in mind, that the future of Bexhill can be considered, but if the next twenty years brings such sweeping changes as the last twenty, it will be difficult to envisage the future where unpredictability is the keynote.

Fig. VI. 16



Brett Drive Trading Estate: small development on
hitherto undeveloped area on former de la Warr
Estates

CHAPTER VII

THE FUTURE

While considering the trends outlined in the previous chapter, one wonders - has Bexhill a future?

An extract from the Survey carried out by the County Borough of Hastings * states:

"In Bexhill the quasi-industrial proposals at Bexhill West Station will do no more than absorb a few of the younger people already living in the town. Projections to 1981 of the Bexhill population suggest that the working age group will decline by about 10% from 1961, and that persons of pensionable age will increase by about 15%. Retired people may well form 75% of the immigrant population. It must be accepted that a reversal of this trend will not be accomplished without substantial industry, and industry will not be available without change in Government policy or a Town Development Scheme. It should, however, be noted that the general development policy approved in the present Development Plan is that Bexhill should remain as a residential seaside town, restricting any industrial expansion to firms already in the area or to such additional service industry as may be necessary to meet the needs of the increased population."

This does not paint a very rosy picture, the very small amount of industry being negligible to restore the imbalance, which is increasing yearly. The Town Development Plan forecasts little change, the main proposals being

- a) allocation of land for private development
- b) land already purchased by the Town Council for future development
- c) extension of the Beeching Trading Estate
- d) road improvement in and around the town.

* "Survey of Employment and Related Trends in Hastings and Bexhill", issued by the County Borough of Hastings, November, 1968.

a) On map VI.2, the present limits to development include the prevention of ribbon development (Town and Country Planning Act of 1947) noticeable to the west of Little Common, the proximity of Pevensey Marshes to the west, the Corporation boundary to the east, as well as the prevention of central infilling by the purchase in 1932 of Broadoak Farm by the Council for future use - most likely for housing. At the moment, this provides a source of income for the Council, (see Map VI.2).

More north, towards the Highwoods, the land rises considerably, drainage thus becoming a more serious consideration, and whereby extra pumping stations (already mentioned) would have to be installed. The Highwoods itself has been allocated by the Council for a future rubbish tip.

The most likely areas for development would seem to be to the north-east of the town, or to the west of Little Common, north and south of the ribbon development of Barnhorn Road. Land allocated for development on the Town Development Plan has already been built on (e.g. Gorseways) as well as land which had not been scheduled for development on the Plan!

b) As well as the Broadoak Farm land, the Council own land in Sidley and Pebsham which are areas for future housing projects (see map VI.2) and future open space areas include a recreation ground (mainly for football pitches) north of the Highlands estate on the old rubbish tip, and Galley Hill as an amenity for the public.

c) The proposed extension to the Beeching Trading Estate will include the north ends of Reginald and Windsor Roads, which were included in the early urban development of the 1880's, and are due for demolition at some future date. The area of proposed extension is shown in Map VII.1

d) Many of the original roads in the town are becoming inadequate for modern traffic, especially the Old Town, which still retains the characteristics of pre-urban development. The road is no exception, and much discussion has taken place between the County and Municipal Councils regarding a by-pass

to this area. The position of this can be seen on map VII.1, (A), and in spite of outcries from private house-owners and hoteliers directly or indirectly affected by it, the County Council are at present preparing the ground.


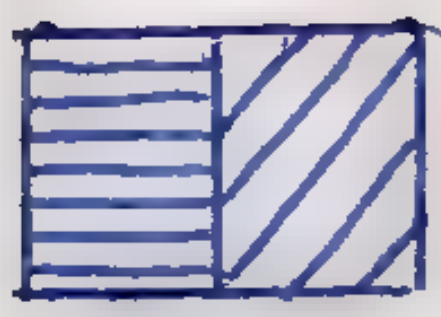
The Town Development Plan proposes a ring road round the town, the route to be taken shown in VII.1(B). Incoming traffic from Eastbourne will enter Little Common, traverse Birkdale (C) and thence join the ring road. An arm southwards (D) gives a connecting road to the sea front. The dotted line (E) on this map indicates the present route at the back of the town, from the north to Hastings, and which is to be widened in the narrower sections.

With the possibility of a Channel Tunnel and increase traffic on the South Coast, much of the piecemeal road improvement in and around the seaside towns will hardly satisfy the needs of the motorists. The Bexhill and Hastings Chambers of Commerce put forward the suggestion for a new south coast motorway largely avoiding the South Downs and the urban areas and ending at Folkestone and/or Dover, and which would overcome the need for compulsory purchase orders in urban areas for their town improvements. The roads in the coastal towns would then be adequate for local traffic and enable the towns to maintain their function as seaside resorts. This proposal was made in January, 1969, when, presumably, the plan was referred to a national level.

Coverage has been given in the local press recently about a possible overspill population from London being accommodated in Hastings, which, according to evidence given in the public enquiry, could amount to 18,000, and at the same time, inject younger blood into that town. It seems that eyes were turned to Bexhill to absorb some of this extra population, but the important factor to consider would be that of supplying the right sort of work, with the emphasis on male labour.

In the future, of course, this will not be in the hands of the Hastings and Bexhill Corporations, since, under the Maud Report proposals, the East Sussex region will ~~control the whole~~ be controlled by a central authority, the Corporations of Eastbourne and Hastings being abolished,

Road improvements & extension of Trading Estate proposed by Development Plan

-  New or improved roads
-  Existing Trading estate
- Proposed extension to trading estate

Source: Approved Development plan for East Sussex County Council
(October, 1952; revised, May, 1953. Amended 1962)





Approximate Scale

and the Municipal Borough of Bexhill likewise. Although there are economic advantages to amalgamation into a unitary area, local councillors have voiced the opinion that Bexhill, being in a remote position in the area, will lose its identity and probably be included in an extensive south-east conurbation.

In the future, the fate of the town will be in the hands of an "outside" authority, and local issues will pale into insignificance, since the people of the town will have little or no influence on its administration, particularly since representation from this area will be small - three members only from East Sussex in the South-East Province Council of 100+ extending from Northamptonshire to Hampshire and Kent.

CONCLUSION

During the course of this study, it has been apparent that, initially, the position of Bexhill village was determined by its elevated position between two low-lying ill-drained areas,^{and} its good water supply enabling the agricultural community to be maintained. However, national and international events, particularly the Industrial Revolution, caused the gradual disappearance of the rural community, and it has been possible, by means of the study, to follow the chain of events, all within the same period of the late nineteenth century, which led to the establishment of an urban settlement.

Changing socio-economic conditions in Great Britain caused rich landowners and speculative developers in the Bexhill area to use the environment to advantage; the gentle climate gave rise to a health resort, the coastal position favoured the establishment of a then fashionable "watering-place", which in turn, was encouraged by the popularity of Hastings and Eastbourne, already expanding resorts, and the importance of the railway as the main form of communication. The simultaneous interaction of all these factors, plus the necessity for a modern drainage scheme, gave the new developers a basis on which to establish the new settlement.

The expansion of the town has been maintained for almost a century, and after the Second World War, increased mobility and standard of living contributed to the migration of hundreds of retired people to the town, resulting in a classic example of population imbalance. The most exclusive attention given to the retired populace has, recently, given cause for concern, since there is little to attract the young person; the short-sighted policy, some years ago, to prevent the introduction of industry may well be the death-knell of the area, and the attempt to rectify this recently may well be too late. The quotation on the following page, I think, sums up the whole problem.

Extract from a speech made by the Rector of St. Peters Parish at a public meeting in the summer of 1967:

"Ten years ago many were speaking about the need to create opportunities for the younger age groups in the town in order to maintain a reasonably balanced community. Although there have been some moves in the right direction, it cannot be denied that there is a hard-core of resistance to all change which has frustrated forward-looking ideas and schemes. This selfish attitude which clings to the status quo for its own sake could result in the life of the town grinding to a halt, drained of all those elements which alone can give it vigour and vitality. Then, in the end, even the elderly would begin to move away because it would no longer be in any sense whatsoever a desirable place in which to live."

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EASTBOURNE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION.

ELMA M. BATES.

MAY, 1970.